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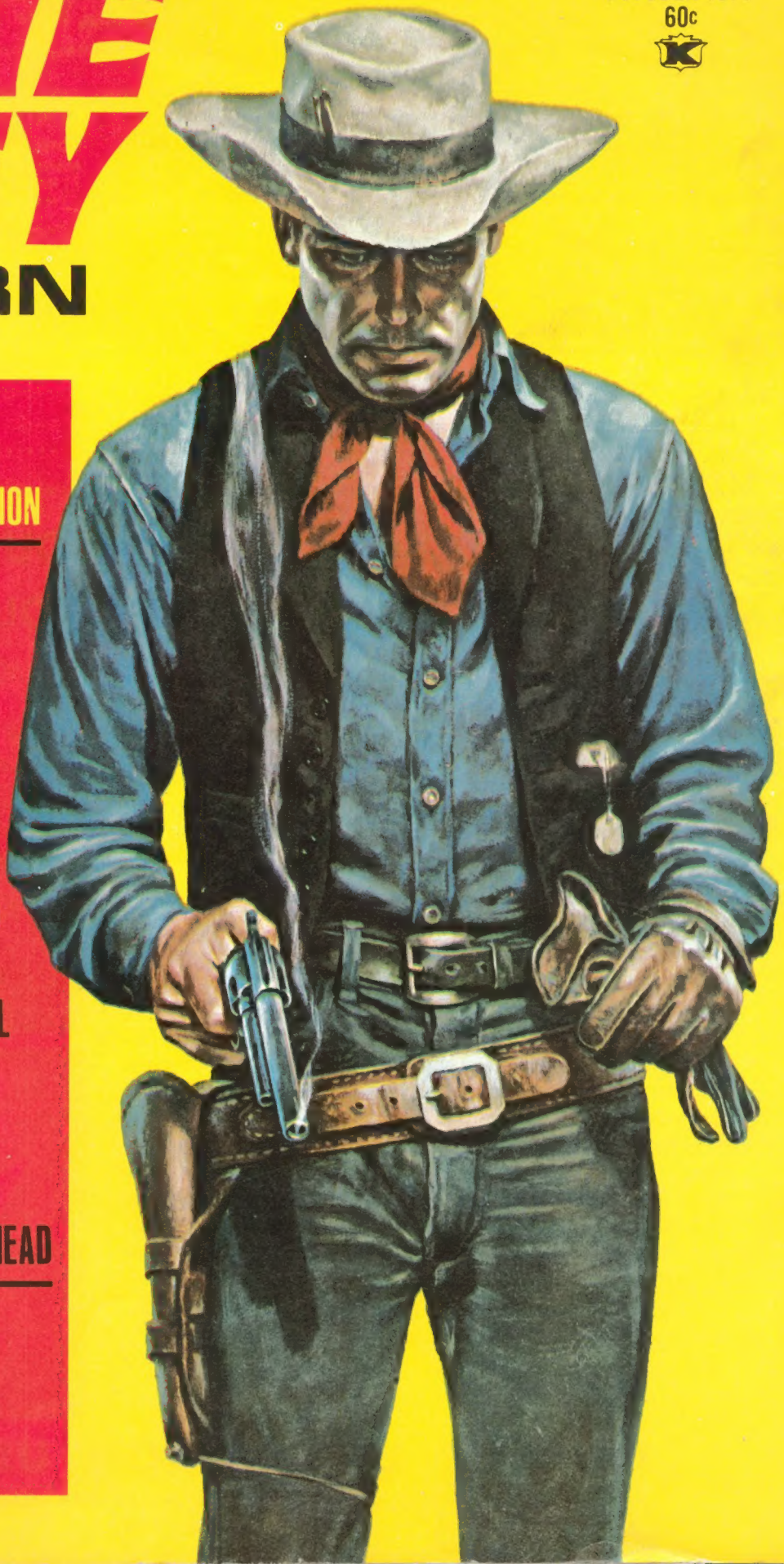

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OCTOBER 1971 Vol. 4, NO. 2

ZANE GREY WESTERN MAGAZINE

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BIGGER THAN EVER — PAYS OFF

EARLY REPORTS ON the first big August issue of Zane Grey Western Magazine more than fulfilled our expectations.

In short, readers everywhere told us by their letters and at the newsstands that the larger-sized format we are now using makes up a magazine truly worthy of the man its title pays homage to — Zane Grey.

No writer in Western fiction history has stayed in print so long as Zane Grey has. RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE, THE LONE STAR RANGER, THE U.P. TRAIL, and other great novels will live as long as Western lore fascinates the hearts of readers.

This magazine in its present form combines a rare blend of top-grade fact and fiction. In addition to a lead novel featuring a famous Zane Grey character, you will find authentic, true Western fact pieces provided by such famous chroniclers of Western lore as Maurice Kildare, Gladwell Richardson, Calico Jones, George Blacksnake, Carey James and many others.

These men have all lived in and known intimately the old West of which they write. You will find in their articles a true picture of the West that was and is no more. And in addition to these, each issue will feature short stories by gifted writers in their field.

Yes, Arizona Ames, Buck Duane, Laramie Nelson and all the other Zane Grey characters will live again — only in this magazine — and we hope for a long time to come.

You have given us heart and encouragement to make this magazine honoring Zane Grey bigger and better than ever. Stay with us. You won't be sorry.

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Publisher.

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KING OF THE RANGE

featuring

ZANE GREY'S

Famous Texas Ranger

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NEW LARAMIE NELSON WESTERN NOVEL

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Spawned of the badlands, Virginia City knew no law but that of the sixgun. But now even she and the proud state of Nevada was doomed, unless Laramie Nelson, single-handed could find and destroy a deadly hard-riding band of lawless conspirators. Grimly, at the urging of President U. S. Grant, the Pinkerton man rode forward to his impossible mission 40

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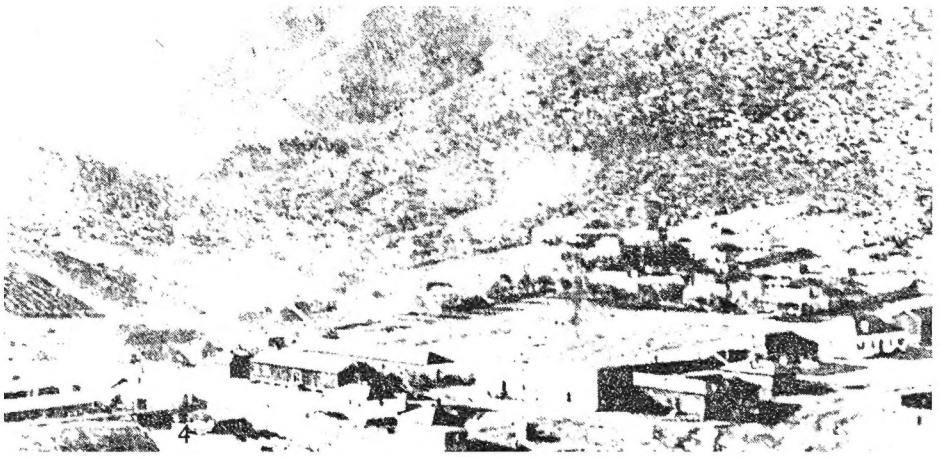
United States cavalry on the charge against the Apaches.

Fort Bowie eventually became the final guardian of bloody Apache Pass.

BLOODY APACHE PASS



By ROBERT HART DAVIS

The road to the gold fields led through Apache country. And to attempt to cross through Apache Pass meant death. But the first use of artillery in history of indian warfare paved the way.

Nachise, the son of Cochise, and his wife. He was wounded in the fight with the California Column at Apache Pass.

An Apache warrior raider.

Mangas, son of Mangas Colorado, who survived the battle of Apache Pass.

A PARTY of nine miners enroute to the California goldfields slowly approached Apache Pass through the northern end of the Chiricahua Mountains in July, 1862.

On the heights above the dark, hostile eyes of Indians spotted them and reported to Cochise, chief of the Chiricahua Apaches. He immediately sent nearly a hundred warriors to the pass.

Two miles east a wide, deep wash ran parallel to the road. Hiding in it, the Apaches watched the miners ride on into their murderous trap.

When they were within forty yards a devastating fire of lead balls crashed from the wash. Five miners were knocked out of their saddles dead. The remaining four wheeled and fled.

In hot pursuit after them, two of the miners were killed and two were overhauled and dragged from their saddles. They were burned alive at the stake.

The bodies were stripped and horribly mutilated. Arrows were shot into them until they looked like pin cushions. The livestock and other property was taken back to Cochise. This loot included $50,000 in gold as was subsequently learned. The Apaches well knew the value of the yellow metal so prized by white men.

On outbreak of the Civil War U. S. troops were withdrawn from the southwest. Many of them went over to the Confederate side, including some of the best combat trained officers.

Arizona and New Mexico territories were left wide open to constant pillage and murder by the Apache tribes. Because the army had departed the Indians imagined that they had driven the blue coats out. This belief persisted even into recent times.

The two great chiefs, Cochise and Colorado Mangas, each bearing an undying hatred for white men, combined their forces, numbering nearly eight hundred warriors. Armed with rifles and revolvers with plenty of ammunition, they also carried bows and arrows. Their arms, coupled with skilled desert strategy, made them formidable fighters.

The place the chiefs selected to ambush, murder and rob travelers was a narrow defile between high walls. The lower ground contained gramma grass and an unfailing water supply.

On the high walls and in the top of two hills overlooking the springs that were called Puerto del Dado, the Apaches constructed ramparts by piling stones into walls.

Because of the water and grass this pass was used more often than Railroad Pass, farther north. The latter was wide, an almost level expanse between the Chiricahua and Pinalono mountains. Unfortunately it was dry.

After murdering the miners the Apaches settled down to wait patiently for more victims. This time they got more than bargained for.

The famous California column of volunteers was led into Arizona by Colonel James H. Carleton. It was composed of infantry and cavalry and was first based in Yuma. The column was ordered east by General E. R. S. Canby in New Mexico to help drive out invading confederate forces.

An advance command was sent east to Tucson. A small force of Confederates had seized the old pueblo in 1861. Greatly outnumbered, they fled ahead of the California column.

The advance consisted of Captain Thomas Roberts with Company E, First California Infantry, and Captain John C. Cremony commanding a detachment of cavalry. Their mission was to protect a train of sixteen wagons loaded with supplies.

Leaving Tucson this force went on to

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

A renegade Apache raiders camp.

the San Pedro River, halting at adobe buildings and corrals established there by the Overland Stage Company. All the company's stations had been abandoned along the route when the regular troops left Arizona and New Mexico and the fierce Apaches began raiding everywhere.

When the march resumed the column went on to Dragoon Springs, two miles off the stage road and located in a deep canyon. Here the command rested up. The next camp was the now empty Ewell's Station, thirty-five miles on east.

From Dragoon Springs Captain Roberts took his infantry and a small detachment of Captain Cremony's cavalry for Apache Pass. There the troops would water and rest again before passing on into New Mexico.

Roberts approached the wide spread mouth of the pass on a stifling, July 14, reaching there about one o'clock in the afternoon.

From the moment troops came into view across the alkali, wind-blown desert, the Apaches observed all their movements. Such a small force, compared to their own vaunted warriors—could they possibly be a danger? Cochise and Mangas Colorado felt absolutely certain of being able to wipe them out with very little trouble.

As the troops moved along, the usual scouts and side riders were out. Captain Roberts had utterly no idea that he was moving straight into a cleverly placed ambush and a desperate battle with the savage Apaches.

Not suspecting any danger at all he entered the pass, leading the column. Awed somewhat by the magnificent grandeur of the mountains and green vegetation the column got almost two-thirds of the way through.

Suddenly, the soldiers were caught flat footed when a veritable rain of lead poured into them from thirty to fifty yards distant. It came from the cliffs and hill slopes down into the pass. Except for the bad marksmanship of the Apaches most of them would have been wiped out.

Not panicking at all, even when three were killed and sixteen wounded, the infantry deployed under cover to the sides. Firing back at an unseen enemy, they wasted considerable ammunition. They shot into positions where powder smoke curled upward.

Every rock and bush concealed an Apache warrior. On the two low hills were many more, overly anxious to get into the fight at close hand combat. They believed annihilating the blue coats would prove easy. Like those below they maintained a steady stream of fire on the soldiers but they in turn were having difficulty aiming at a human target.

At the outset, dismounting and tossing bridle reins to a cavalryman, Roberts ordered them to the rear. As he explained to Cremony later, in a final show-down the cavalry was absolutely indespensible to the infantry.

Moving forward, Roberts took personal charge. He slowed them down from shooting uselessly. For three long hours the infantry held on under a broiling sun. They failed trying to locate even one Apache to aim at. However, as was learned later from the Apaches themselves, three of the savages were killed by ricocheting balls.

Dispatching a message to the rear to bring up the two twelve-pound howitzers that had been brought along, Roberts withdrew the infantry in good order without suffering a casualty. This was done skillfully by keeping behind cover of rocks and brush.

After retreating to the entrance of the pass, Roberts reorganized his troops. Skirmishers were thrown out to command the road from each side of the pass while advancing under cover to former positions.

The howitzers were wheeled along

General E. R. S. Canby who ordered the California Column of volunteers to cross Arizona into New Mexico to help repel Confederate forces, and sent them into battle at Apache Pass.

with this movement. Slowly, laboring in the terrible July heat, the infantry gained some fairly desirable positions.

It was soon apparent the situation was so difficult that Roberts debated about retreating. But that was almost an impossibility. The soldiers had come across forty miles of waterless desert. They and the livestock were in sorry shape. Throats were bone dry, rasping. Tongues and lips were swollen. It was a matter of life or death to reach the springs so strongly defended by the Apache hordes.

Under cover on the sides and not firing recklessly at savages so cleverly hidden, the infantry waited. The howitzers were brought to the fore.

The range was determined, especially on the two hills and firing began. This was the first time in southwestern history that artillery was employed against Indians.

Apaches were blasted out of parts of the hills and from rocks on the sides. Each time a shell exploded, stones in the barricades and parts of Apache bodies lifted high into the air.

When the Apaches' hail of lead diminished Captain Roberts led a platoon of his men in a charge towards the stone-walled stage station house. It was suspected that Apaches would be hiding inside. But when the first squad ran in with bayonets fixed they found the several rooms empty. Only dust and refuse marked the floor. The few holding it had fled post-haste when the charge materialized.

Occupancy of the station house was a decided advantage. However, the infantry must go on. Few were hardly in anything like good physical condition. But those volunteers, mainly rugged miners from California's Mother Lode country, were tough. They were more so than anyone had counted on, especially since they had had no experience fighting fierce savages like the Apaches.

Water was still six hundred yards away. Roberts led his weary men on after a short breather. Always in the forefront, leading charges against some held strong point, he gained little headway. Only those Apaches at the base of the walls and along the creek were driven out.

Four hundred feet up on the heights, the main concentration of Cochise and Mangas Colorado's warriors could not be dislodged. They continued firing down on the soldiers.

Desperate measures were required so Roberts moved the howitzers closer, although exposed to fire from above. The Apaches must be knocked off the pass walls and out of the hill tops.

The howitzers were hauled just a few yards from the station house. Both opened ineffectual fire. Here the range was indefinite, whereas before it had been figured out to the yard.

At one of the howitzers a gunner dropped wounded. Somehow the howitzer was overturned and put temporarily out of action.

Cremony in his report declared the accident due to stupidity of the gunners.

They were then called artillerymen and Cremony wasn't even there. He said his own cavalrymen saved the situation from disaster.

It seems that a sergeant, never identified by name, rushed in recklessly, righted the gun and placed it in firing order.

But the steady rain of lead balls on the howitzers drove the gunners away. While they regrouped, preparing to run back despite the exposed position, Cavalry Sergeant Mitchell took over.

The few cavalrymen with Roberts were unhappy because they had not been allowed to charge into the Apache held part of the pass. But Roberts believed many of them would be wiped out quickly, and loss of troopers and horses would leave him critically handicapped.

Taking forth on his own, Sergeant Mitchell, with the help of six infantry gunners, charged out. They grabbed the nearest howitzer. Instead of manning it to open fire they retreated backwards, hauling the piece down to level ground.

While doing so they were fired on constantly, and also while bringing back the second howitzer from the danger zone.

Gunners manned the twelve pounders, firing one round into the top of a hill to correct the new range. It overshot but the next shell hit behind an earlier partly wrecked barrier where most of the Apaches crouched.

Apaches could be seen scurrying down the hill side as more and more shells were fired to completely destroy its use as a fort.

Fire then shifted to the second hill top. Again rocks and parts of bodies were hurled upward in the air. When it was demolished howitzer fire was directed at rock piles and brush along the creek, at any cover where an Apache could possibly hide.

The two howitzers fired for an hour, making four hours in all that the soldiers had withstood the rigors of their condition.

After bursting shells began taking heavy toll of the entrenched Apaches they were observed fleeing in all directions. Many were visible against the blue sky, going over the pass rims but they were too distant to bring down.

After the flight of the Apaches Captain Roberts made a cautious reconnaissance to the springs. Each man in the patrol was told to take one drink of water and fill the canteens brought along.

Cochise, the chief of the Chiricahus Apaches. (From an early artist's drawing; unknown.)

This patrol occupied higher ground to guard the springs. Men and horses were watered and retired to the stage station which was a veritable fort. Guards and pickets were placed according to regulations and with a few more for security as a safeguard against reprisal attack.

Since the howitzers were on wheels the Apaches called them wagons. In after years they said that sixty three warriors were killed by the shelling and more than a hundred wounded.

Cochise himself said when too old to fight the U. S. Army any longer:

"We would have killed all the blue coats if they had not fired wagons at us."

Roberts sent back seven cavalrymen to report to Cremony, who had moved up to Ewell's Station. They were in charge of Sergeant Mitchell, Halfway to their destination they were jumped by almost a hundred Apaches.

One horse was killed in the initial attack which forced two troopers to ride double. Sergeant Maynard was wounded in the right arm, broken below the elbow. Sergeant John Teal was cut off during the running fight along the road by thirty whooping Apaches.

On reaching Ewell's Station with the survivors Mitchell reported details of the four-hour fight in Apache Pass to Cremony. Roberts' message said that he would come through that night to meet the wagon train.

Mitchell and the other troopers were confident that Teal was dead, his body stripped and mutilated in regular savage style. But this was not so.

Teal was having plenty of trouble after his comrades vanished down the road in dust clouds. Cut off, he turned his horse south trying to outrun the Apaches in open country. His horse was too tired and nearly famished to keep running fast for long. Closing near him the Apaches opened a steady fire.

It was then about dark and his horse fell mortally wounded. Teal dropped down behind the carcass with his rifle, determined to kill as many of the Indians as possible before they overran him.

He had a breech loading carbine with which he fired bullets as fast as possible. This caused the Apaches to dismount and charge him on the ground. Using the cover of low bushes they did get fairly near but their fire was ineffective. On the other hand Teal sent several straightening out and kicking their last.

One lone mounted Apache appeared on the scene. Unmindful of bullets he came within range, shouting orders to urge them on. Drawing careful aim, Teal knocked him out of the saddle.

Thereafter the Apaches mounted and began retreating. One was seen holding a wounded Apache on his mount. Not until a year later was it learned that Teal shot no less than Mangas Colorado through the chest. Critically wounded, Mangas was taken to a Mexican doctor in Janos, Chihuahua.

The doctor was told that if Mangas Colorado died he would be tortured to death. The chief lived but carried the bullet in his chest to the day he was killed in New Mexico by a soldier.

Removing saddle, blankets and bridle from his dead horse, Teal hiked eight miles through the night to Ewell's Station. His arrival there astonished the other troopers.

Less than an hour after Teal packed in his riding gear, Roberts and thirty men arrived at the station at two o'clock in the morning. The rest of the advance force was left at the stage station in command of Lieutenant Thompson.

The forward march of Cremony's wagon train began at five o'clock the next morning. Half of the cavalry was sent ahead of the advance and the other section brought up the rear. Infantrymen walked along sides of the road near the wagons that wheeled up enormous clouds of alkali dust.

These precautions were necessary to guard against sudden onslaught, for the Apaches were all around them. Small groups were observed at various times moving on a parallel course. Very carefully they remained out of rifle range. Perhaps they imagined the wagons on wheels would shoot at them again.

The command suffered intensely from the heat. On nearing the pass Cremony called a rest halt.

It was uncertain whether or not Apaches had overcome and massacred the infantry at the stage station and reoccupied the pass. Roberts took a detail forward to investigate.

When the march resumed the cavalrymen closed up and the infantry deployed as skirmishers but ready to run back to the wagons if the train had to fort up in a circle.

Apaches had returned into the formidable pass in small numbers. They had not been able to dislodge the infantrymen in the stage station house. Rock barriers on the hills had been reoccupied and this prevented anyone obtaining water at the springs or taking livestock there.

Without suffering any expected assault the train and soldiers reached the stage station. The force had to have water. The only way to obtain it was to drive the Apaches out again.

Roberts ordered the howitzers into place, and they opened fire before the infantry charged forward to engage in hand-to-hand conflict. Usually the Apaches leaped up and sprinted away crookedly, dodging bullets.

Soon after the howitzers opened fire and the infantry advanced Cremony went to Roberts. He requested permission to lead his cavalry in a charge along the creek to rout Apaches out of the bushes. Roberts gaped at him in astonishment.

(continued on page 29)

U. S. Cavalry with Indian scouts pursuing Apache warriors. (Sketch in the field by Frederic Remington)

How to Lose up to 10 Pounds in only 10 days with Newest Grapefruit "Super-C" Diet

Delicious Vitamin Rich Diet flushes excess fat out of body... without drugs, pills, hateful exercises or nasty hunger pangs.

By Elizabeth Louise

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA (Special Report) – From this fabulous Gold Coast City comes word of the latest, high-speed grapefruit reducing discovery. The "SUPER-C" Plan is *new* and *different* from other grapefruit diets. No long waiting. This one is so fast that it actually begins to work within 24 hours – *even while you sleep!* That's why you can reduce up to 10 pounds in only 10 days!

NO DRUGS ... NO PILLS

No nauseating medicines. Not even vitamin capsules are required. You aren't forced to do tedious exercises that wear you out. Best of all, you'll never suffer from cruel starvation jitters. You can enjoy hundreds of delicious satisfying foods – rich in natural vitamins, body building proteins, farm fresh dairy products and grains. Plus choice tidbits – delicious, scrumptious snacks that really satisfy ... *eat all you want,* day or night ... with meals or after meals. Yet lose weight faster than you ever dreamed possible! Up to 10 full pounds (or more) in just 10 days! All this thanks to the new fast-acting "SUPER-C" Grapefruit Diet and Regimen. Supercharged with NATURAL VITAMIN "C" – the health ingredient acclaimed by doctors, dieticians and famous scientists all over the world. Yes! This grapefruit diet uses the right combination of foods to burn up accumulated body fat!

RESHAPES YOUR BODY

This sensational method really *transforms* your figure, day after day. And then, one morning, you wake up to find that your body is lean, lithe and limber again, as in years gone by. Yes! A slender more vigorous body – aglow with youthful sex appeal. This new strange regimen has worked wonders for thousands of men and women coast-to-coast. It can work wonders for you too, but there is a catch! You must *like* grapefruit (fresh or canned). You must follow the *Special Private Instructions* for 10 days. That's all! It's much easier than you think to get wonderful results! And, as it flushes fat out of your body, this great diet also helps you overcome that tired, sluggish 'old age' feeling due to overweight.

WHY STARVATION DIETS FAIL

Many faddish diets almost starve you to death. Such silly diets are against nature itself. That's why your body fights back. Pretty soon the unsightly fat returns – pound after pound. SUPER-C Grapefruit Diet is *different.* You're never starved. You don't skip a single meal. In fact, you get hearty breakfasts, lunches, dinners. You enjoy a rich variety of good eating – foods you've always craved for. Just imagine ... now you can partake of spareribs, thick, juicy steaks, fried chicken, pork, bacon and eggs, and scores of other "prohibited" dishes. You actually fill up on lots of delicious foods. Yet, by using the *right combination of foods* you burn up accumulated fat fast! Right up to 10 pounds or more in only 10 days!

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Your body burns up fat much as a car motor burns fuel. But after years of faulty dieting, fats become hardened and lazy – *locked up in body tissues.* They may clog up arteries, placing life itself in jeopardy. The excess fat becomes stored in arms, thighs, buttocks, midriff, etc. You *look* older. You *feel* older. You *act* older.

ERASE OLD AGE LOOKS!

Genuine Super-C Diet / Regimen has been proven in thousands of cases. It *unlocks* those deep-stored fats. Like the spark plugs in your car, it ignites them, then METABOLIZES them right out of your body. And soon enough, the unsightly bulges and awkward pot belly vanish away. It's incredibly fast! No matter how overweight you are, you can actually lose up to 10 pounds or MORE, in 10 short days. Yes! Even if ordinary grapefruit diets failed before. Besides, this natural plan is 100% safe. It's fun. It's easy and economical to follow. No costly food fads. Everything you need is available in your own food market. No boring, muscle-twitching exercises. And no pills. No starvation diets ever. You eat your fill. Yet, strange, but true, you lose pound after pound – even though you gorge yourself on scrumptious foods! This new Super-C Diet/ Regimen helps you feel younger ... act younger ... and regain that *sparkling, youthful look* of long ago.

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COTTON PICKIN' MARSHAL

By GLADWELL RICHARDSON

CRIS MADSEN, THE HARD RIDING MARSHAL OF GUTHRIE, SPOKE SOFTLY — BUT HIS GUN SPOKE LOUD.

KANSAS SHERIFF Chalk Beeson sat in U. S. Chief Deputy Marshal Cris Madsen's Guthrie office late at night, relating a story of horror.

The Bill Doolin gang had robbed the Sperryville, Kansas bank of $18,000 on November 1, 1892.

Doolin, Bill Dalton and Bittercreek Newcomb made good their escape into Oklahoma Territory. But Beeson had trailed the other member of the outfit, Oliver Yountis also known as Crescent Sam, into the territory. He did not catch up with the outlaw. But overhead flying buzzards led him to the mutilated body of a rancher, obviously wantonly murdered for his horse. Yountis had left his jaded horse behind.

The chunky, wide-shouldered Madsen nodded his head.

"I will go get him for you."

Taking along Deputy Marshals Heck Thomas and Tom Houston, he rode twenty miles north of Guthrie and staked out the farm home of the outlaw's sister.

In the gray dawn Yountis appeared from the house with two sixguns strapped on and a rifle slung under one arm.

Madsen stepped towards him calling, "Throw up your hands!"

Instead of complying Yountis opened fire. Madsen then drilled him and the outlaw toppled over. In his pockets was found $4,500 in currency, his share of the bank robbery loot.

The outlaw's sudden demise created a sensation in Guthrie. It had been a quick run-down and shoot-out. But Madsen had always been that type of fast moving marshal. While other marshals of the period gained more fame and glory, he kept plugging away in his usual quiet, capable fashion.

Madsen was a Dane, born February 25, 1851 in Copenhagen. While still in his teens he served in the Danish army against the Prussians during the Schleswig-Holstein War of 1864.

He then spent four years in the French Foreign Legion, fighting in several battles and was seriously wounded at Sudan. After returning home he was sent into France to work with the underground resistance movement against the German conquerors.

U. S. Chief Deputy Marshal Cris Madsen.

The Oklahoma Territorial marshals and staff: (Seated): Cris Madsen, chief deputy marshal; Miss Hitchcock, stenographer; William Grimes, first U.S. Marshall. (Standing): Heck Thomas, deputy marshal, acting as jailer; I. S. Prather of El Reno, and Warren Cleaver, chief clerk.

With the defeat of France he crossed the Atlantic to New York. On January 21, 1876, he enlisted in the U. S. 7th Cavalry, expecting to be sent west to fight Indians. To his disappointment he was transferred to the 5th Cavalry at Fort Hays, Kansas. His next duty was at Fort Reno in the Indian Territory, going from there with a detachment of the 5th for the campaign against Sitting Bull in Wyoming.

He did not reach General George A. Custer's 7th Cavalry before the massacre on the Little Big Horn but did help bury the victims.

From Wyoming he was sent into the southwest, becoming chief of scouts at Fort Bowie in Arizona. Subsequently he served against the Colorado Ute Indians, the northern Sioux, Cheyenne and Nez Perce.

While stationed in 1885 at Fort Riley, Kansas, Cris Madsen became engaged to Maggie Morris. Unexpectedly he was transferred back to Fort Reno, where Maggie and her parents soon joined him. Madsen and Maggie were married December 15, 1887. Two sons and a daughter were subsequently born to them.

A frugal man, Madsen had saved some of his low army pay through the years. This enabled him to buy a farm at the village of Yukon near the town of El Reno. Maggie and her parents were established there. She remained at home even when he was sent to temporary duty elsewhere.

While raising some livestock, the principal crop grown was short staple cotton. Every leave and when off duty, Madsen spent his time working on the farm. He became known around the fort as the "cotton pickin' soldier."

At this period outlaw gangs were making the Oklahoma and Indian territories their hunting and hiding grounds.

William Grimes of Kingfisher was appointed U. S. marshal. He was guaranteed twenty deputies and permitted to pick his own chief deputy to clean out the outlaw gangs.

While searching for the best man to select as his chief deputy Grimes visited Fort Reno to look over Cris Madsen whom he had heard much about. The commanding officer recommended him highly.

When offered the job Madsen hesitated overly long, until Grimes mentioned that the salary of the chief deputy marshal was $250.

For a few moments Madsen sat stunned in disbelief. His sergeants' pay was then $29 a month. This was hardly enough to support his growing family during those years when farm crops failed. This was his opportunity to improve his family's lot and he accepted the job on January 21, 1891.

Madsen was a self-effacing, quiet individual. His appointment surprised many people. They changed from calling him the cotton pickin' soldier to Marshal Grimes' cotton pickin' chief deputy.

He proved to be anything but a cotton pickin' deputy. Other marshals who served with him declared that he ended the careers of more desperate criminals than any of them.

A little later he was joined by Deputy Marshals William (Bill) Tilghman and Henry (Heck) Thomas with the special assignment of wiping out the notorious Doolin gang. So efficiently did they apply themselves to this chore they soon became known throughout the territories as the Three Guardsmen.

The first real big case handled by Cris Madsen was corraling a gang of Indian whiskey peddlers. Soon after taking up a stand on a creek trail used by them near El Reno, five riders came down it in a hurry.

On their refusal to halt and surrender Madsen opened fire. Before the outlaws could get into action to defend themselves his accurate marksmanship forced them to surrender—two soldiers from Fort Reno and three civilians.

While still pursuing the Doolin gang

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Sitting Bull. Madsen campaigned against him while in the Cavalry.

Zip Wyatt alias Dick Yeager.

he was suddenly summoned to Fort Sill on a murder case.

An Australian citizen, Pete Schneider, killed a man with a butcher knife and escaped. Theorizing that he would make for a west coast seaport, Madsen hurried to San Francisco. He caught Schneider there preparing to take a steamer to Australia.

The Dick Yeager gang, alias the Zip Wyatt gang, had killed the station agent while robbing a passenger train at Wharton, May 9, 1890. All trails were cold and Yeager had completely disappeared.

On becoming the chief deputy marshal Madsen thoughtfully reviewed the case. He advised sending an undercover man to the Indiana town where Yeager hailed from. This was done, the outlaw arrested there in December, 1892 and returned to the territory.

Escaping from the federal jail Yeager promptly resumed his old career of robbing trains, banks, way stations and country stores.

Taking after him with a posse, Madsen reasoned correctly that he would try hiding out in Steer Hollow in Woods County. He was found there and partly surrounded. In the bitter exchange of lead several of the possemen's horses were killed and Yeager was seriously wounded.

However, the outlaw managed to escape during the night and pursuit began at dawn. Before they were able to trail Yeager far Madsen was recalled to El Reno in an emergency.

Five days afterwards Enid officers came across Yeager in a cornfield. He was captured and jailed, where he died two days later from his wounds.

The regrouping Doolin outlaws held up a Santa Fe Railroad train near Cimarron, Kansas, May 28, 1893. They escaped southward with $13,000 in loot.

When advised of their newest foray Cris Madsen deduced the probably route the outlaws were using to their territorial hideouts. Having little time to organize a posse, he asked for Indian scouts from Fort Supply. They were sent, along with a detachment of cavalry to where the town of Buffalo now stands.

Meeting them there with the small pickup posse, he was barely in time to discover that the gang was riding past about four hundred yards away. Dashing towards them he got close enough to fire one rifle shot. The bullet hit Doolin's left booted foot.

The outlaws were mounted light on very fast horses and escaped easily. When they reached the ranch of Jim Riley, the bullet was cut out of Doolin's foot. When captured later by Tilghman the outlaw gave the bullet to him to present to Madsen in Guthrie.

Madsen was in the field, riding after lesser outlaws in the eastern Indian Territory, when the battle between the Doolin gang and a marshals posse happened on the street in Ingalls, September 1, 1893.

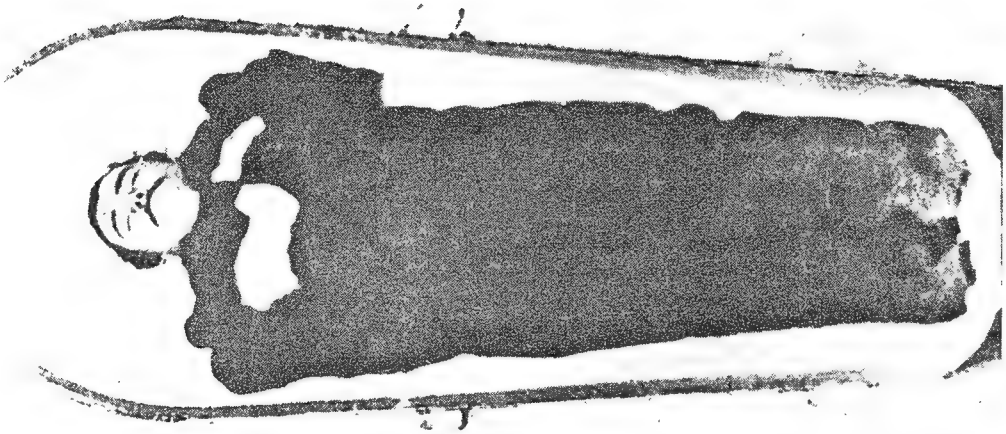
The notorious stock thieves Felix Young and Nat Sylvia organized a large gang. Included were some well known cutthroats like Jim Morgan and Bill Rhodes. Rhodes was an elderly man who once had rode with the James and Younger brothers.

They planned to rob a Rock Island Railroad train the night of April 9, 1894 at Round Pond. Guards on the train spotted Morgan and Rhodes entering the engine cab to throw down on the hoghead and fireman. They immediately opened fire. The other outlaws, hidden in shadows along the train, fired back at them.

In their attempt to escape from the engine cab, Rhodes was killed as he reached the ground, and Morgan got away from the depot only to be captured by irate citizens. Readily confessing, he named Young and Sylvia as the ringleaders.

On reaching the scene with a posse, Madsen scoured the surrounding country for their escape trail until having to return to El Reno.

To his great surprise while walking along the main street he recognized Young. As he walked towards him the outlaw managed to reach his horse. After ordering him to halt, Madsen fired five shots. All missed Young but one smashed into his horse and the animal plunged down. Men standing close by drew their guns and held Young until



Oliver Yountis in casket before buried.

Tulsa Jack Blake after the marshals shot him.

Chief Deputy Madsen reached them.

At almost the same time Deputy Marshal Eichoff recognized Sylvia approaching the Kerfoot Hotel and arrested him.

The pair of outlaws were jailed in Guthrie. Later they were taken by Madsen to Round Pond to stand trial. Released on the robbery charge, Young was re-arrested on another federal warrant.

While awaiting their trials both outlaws escaped. Sylvia was captured in Texas and returned to Guthrie.

Madsen picked up Young's trail, following close behind him into Colorado, where he learned that the fugitive had gone on to California. Continuing his pursuit over the long distance he caught up with Young at Wheatland and took him back.

Witnesses of the Round Pond attempted train robbery declared that there were several others besides those named in Morgan's confession. Madsen warned officers throughout the territories to be careful, for the unknown outlaws were quick to shoot.

One day at three o'clock in the afternoon two suspicious men rode into Yukon, close to El Reno. They carried sixguns and Winchester rifles with them as they went into a store. Observing their movements, County Deputy Sheriff Sam Farris followed them in and demanded their surrender. One of them drew a sixgun, shooting Farris fatally.

As the two men ran out on the street, Joe Farris, Sam's brother, sped after them, seizing one about the waist. Bystanders joined in disarming the outlaw.

Mounting up, the other one opened fire on the crowd. A quickly formed posse overtook and wounded him in the leg while killing his horse. Somehow he managed to get away from the posse into the brushy South Canadian River bottoms as a stormy night drew down.

By the next dawn Madsen was after him with a posse. The outlaw's flight trail was successfully followed out of the river brush and timber. Overhauled north of Arapaho in Custer County he gave up without resistance.

Madsen immediately recognized him as Jim Casey, whom he had arrested with his brother, Victor, a few years before. They had been charged with a series of homesteaders' murders on Mustang Creek. Victor was the brother captured in Yukon.

When Deputy Sheriff Farris died the outlaws were charged with murder. They denied being memebers of the Young-Sylvia gang but the evidence was otherwise.

Victor Casey's wounds became worse and he died in jail at El Reno. Jim was removed to the Oklahoma City jail where he became friends with Bob and Jim Christian awaiting trial on murder charges.

The three overpowered the jailer one night and fled. The Christian brothers were never heard of again. Jim Casey was shot dead by a police officer while trying to get out of Oklahoma City.

A stockman near Anadarko, Jim Bourland, reported to Madsen that Kid Lewis and Tom Foster were responsible for the outbreak of livestock stealing plaguing the Arapaho community.

By some means Lewis and Foster learned that Bourland had accused them. They called him out of his home in the middle of the night and shot him dead. Madsen immediately took up the case.

He and two deputies tracked the slayers south to Red River and over into Texas. They arrived in Wichita Falls just after the two had been captured in a short gun battle while robbing a bank and killing the president and a cashier.

Naturally Texas authorities refused to hand them over to Madsen. He and his deputies started for Oklahoma and home. An hour later a fast rider summoned them back to Wichita Falls to identify Lewis and Foster. Cris Madsen did so while their bodies hung by the necks to a telegraph pole where a mob had swung them into eternity.

In early May, 1895, the still rampaging Doolin gang held up a Rock Island passenger train never Dover, north of Kingfisher. Cris Madsen took two deputies, three civilians and two Indian scouts and their riding stock in a one-car special train and headed for Dover.

Arriving in Dover only a few hours after the holdup, horses were let out of the car and the posse went after the gang.

Never before had officers reached a crime scene so quickly. This swift maneuver fooled Doolin. Not far from town the outlaws halted to rest a spell.

Just before sundown Madsen led his men over a hill into the creek bottom where the outlaws loafed. The sharp crack of gunfire erupted instantly.

Riding in the lead Madsen's horse was killed beneath him. Freeing himself from the saddle he rolled into a stand of persimmon trees. Before he was able to get back into the hot fight a huge horse bearing Tulsa Jack Blake pounded almost over him.

In sheer desperation Madsen fired point blank at the outlaw's face. The bullet hit Blake between the eyes and he spilled from the saddle while the horse dashed on into deeper timber.

Two of the outlaws' horses were killed in the fight and one of the scouts died with half a dozen bullets in him.

The short, furious battle was over when Madsen got to his feet. Taking the dead scout's pony he led the pursuit after the gang. Loss of the horses forced them to double up. It looked for a while they would catch up with the outlaws. But descending night put an end to the chase and the outlaws made it to hiding places on the Cimarron River.

In September a message was received from a sergeant in charge of a

(continued on page 29)

The Wild Bunch of which the Ketchum brothers were members. (Standing): Bill Carver and Harvey Logan. (Seated): Harry Longabaugh, the Sundance Kid; Bill Kilpatrick, the Tall Texan; and Butch Cassidy.

When Blackjack Lost His Head

They finally hanged Blackjack Ketchum — but not before he had taken a fearsome toll in gold and human lives.

By CAREY JAMES

PLUNGING OUT of the San Simon Valley in Arizona, seven outlaws robbed a Southern Pacific Railroad train between Willcox and Bowie.

Taking after them with a posse from Cochise County, Sheriff Joe Fly never caught sight of the gang.

Their method of operation was similar to the same gang that successfully pulled at least a half dozen other robberies in Fly's county. The six-foot-four, two hundred and fifty pound leader, black-haired, black mustache below flinty gray-green eyes, Fly was certain was no less than Blackjack Tom Ketchum.

Losing the outlaws' trail near the New Mexico line, Sheriff Fly turned back bitterly disappointed.

He muttered darkly, "One of these days that big son is going to make a bad mistake and lose his head!"

Sheriff Fly never predicted anything more accurately. But not even he could have foreseen that when Blackjack lost his head it would be in a hangman's noose.

Thomas, Samuel and Barry Ketchum were born in Texas near where Richland Creek entered the San Saba River. Their father was a dentist who moved to San Angelo to ply his trade.

Going south into Tom Green County, Barry set himself up with a ranch raising horses. He was the only honest and law-abiding one of the three brothers.

Tom, soon to become known as "Blackjack" because he could not resist a twenty-one game, learned criminal ways along with Sam from two first cousins, Dick and Bige Duncan.

Bige Duncan drew several years in the penitentiary when convicted of stealing horses. On his release he married one of the Ketchum brothers' sisters, his own first cousin.

Traveling his torried way, Dick Duncan robbed and killed a Mr. Parker and his wife. Convicted of the murders, he was hanged at Eagle Pass in 1889.

When he was seventeen Blackjack Tom Ketchum failed to buy a fancy silver braid decorated sombrero from a Mexican in San Angelo. The next day the Mexican was found dead and Blackjack was wearing the high peaked head piece. But there was a lack of evidence against him.

Not long afterwards Blackjack and Sam Ketchum were indicted for horse theft and fled to McCullough County. Tracing them to a hideout in Cow Valley, a posse struck them. Able to stand off the lawmen long enough to reach their horses, the brothers escaped.

For a few months they threw in with Barry in Tom Green County. Trying to stay out of trouble was impossible. Blackjack shot a howling dog before a church and was arrested by Sheriff G. W. Shields and fined a small sum.

Good horses soon began to vanish in that and adjoining counties. Descriptions of the thieves seen in the night fitted Blackjack and Sam Ketchum.

A band of six men holding up a Southern Pacific Railroad train at Lozier was led by two men remarkably similar to Blackjack and Sam. While Texas Rangers investigated and prepared to close in, Blackjack killed Jap Powers.

The Ketchums were now far beyond the pale of the law. They made a run into New Mexico in 1890. The handsome and friendly pair went to work as cowboys, eventually locating on the WS outfit near isolated Alma.

Surrounding mountains provided many excellent hiding places and the Arizona Territorial border lay only a few miles west. Various members of Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch, after robberies in Wyoming, Colorado and Idaho, rode hard all the way south to hide on the WS ranch or near Alma. The Ketchums soon became acquainted with them.

The main group of this gang consisted of Butch Cassidy, their nominal leader; the brothers Harvey and Lonnie Logan; George Curry; Elzie Lay;

Thomas "Blackjack" Ketchum

Trinidad where each of the Ketchum brothers were first taken for medical treatment.

A main corner in Santa Fe, where both Ketchums were sent to hospitals and jails.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Deaf Charley; Camille Hanks; Harry Longbaugh famed as The Sundance Kid; Bill Carver and Ben Kilpatrick who was also known as The Tall Texan.

A loosely knit organization of outlaws, the Wild Bunch were likely to strike anywhere from the Canadian Border to the Mexican line.

One of their several hideouts was Hole in the Wall in Wyoming, where Blackjack and Sam went to join them. Later on, after becoming known in Arizona and New Mexico as the Blackjack Ketchum gang they were still referred to as Hole in the Wall outlaws.

For northern thefts of livestock, bank and train robberies Butch Cassidy—whose real name was George Leroy Parker—or one of his lieutenants led the gang. But down in the southwest leadership was always turned over to Blackjack Ketchum because he knew the region best.

While running with the Cassidy gang the Ketchums were involved in a number of train and bank holdups in Wyoming and Colorado. Sheriffs hunted them everywhere. Railroad, express company agents and Pinkerton detectives sought them constantly.

Of the many officers blood-hounding them the most outstanding was the Colorado & Southern Railroad Special Agent William "Billy" Reno. He was assigned specifically to run down the Ketchums and never quit until both were dead.

One of his New Mexico informers, John Legg, was killed at Fort Sumner by Blackjack soon after getting word to Reno that the Ketchum brothers were preparing to move back north to Wyoming or Colorado.

Another of Reno's spies was shot dead while sitting on the porch of the Clayton House, Clayton's largest hotel. He was joined by a friend shortly before a stranger rode up on a black horse. Coming up to the edge of the porch the big man drew a sixgun and shot the spy dead where he sat. Blackjack Ketchum was easily identified as the killer.

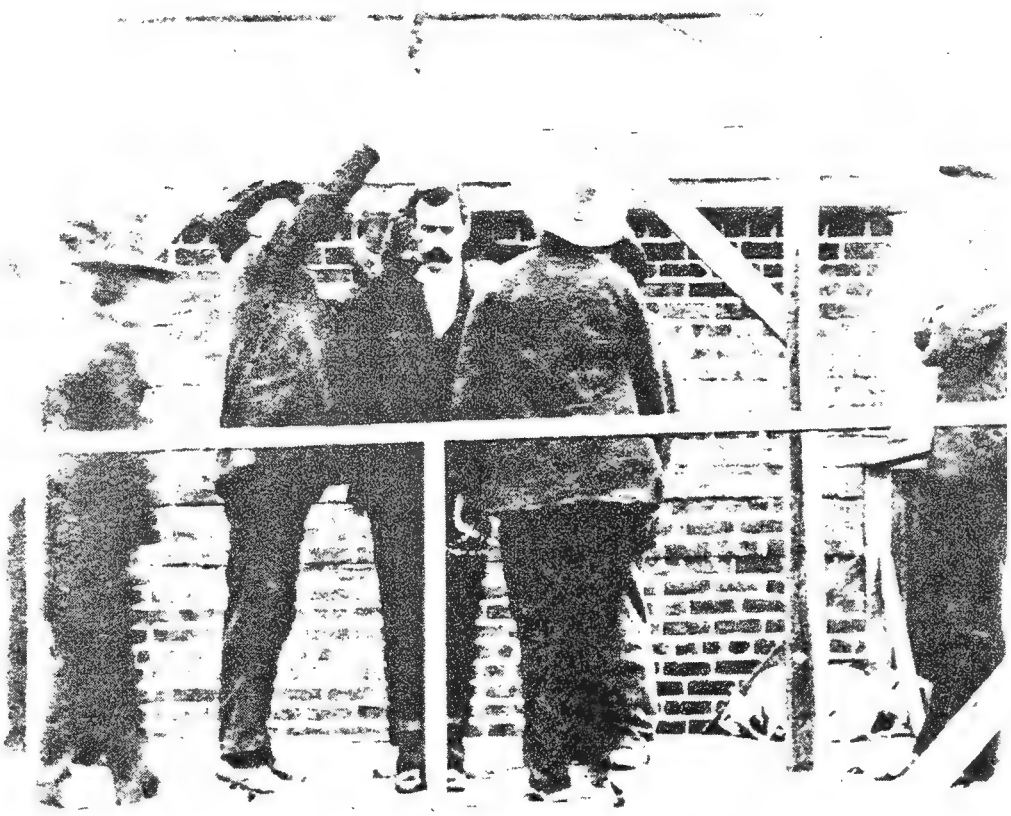
After a profitable train robbery in Wyoming, the gang split up for awhile. The Ketchum brothers set out for New Mexico. At Sopris, southwest of Trinidad, they stole two fine horses. Riding into the little town boldly, they tied their own and the stolen horses before Angelo Carley's saloon.

The brothers stood shaking dice for the drinks when a man ran in off the street.

He yelled excitedly at Carley, who was also a deputy sheriff, "Arrest those two culprits! They stole my horses that are tied right out here on the street."

Carley drawled, "Boys, consider yourselves under arrest. Who's turn to roll the bones?"

The crash of Blackjack's sixgun came from below a broad grin on his thick lipped mouth. When Carley fell dead behind the bar the Ketchums walked nonchalantly through the stunned crowd, mounted and rode out of town with the stolen horses.



Blackjack Ketchum on the scaffold platform being made ready for execution.

When the sheriff arrived from Trinidad he heard the two described as being tall, favoring each other and the actual killer sporting a black mustache. But not until Blackjack's capture later on was he identified as the murderer.

In northern New Mexico they camped on Mt. Baldy, occasionally riding into the small village of Elizabethtown to drink and gamble at Moore's saloon. Finally they went on south to Separ, staying at the Diamond A Ranch in the Pyramid Mountains.

When Sam Ketchum took a notion to ride north to Alma, Blackjack, accompanied by two outlaws working on the ranch as cowhands, entered Arizona to heist a Douglas bank.

While easily outrunning a sheriff's posse after the holdup they didn't fare so well on their return. The sheriff of Hidalgo County had long suspected the many strangers at the Diamond A were responsible for a number of missing horses.

Approaching the ranch with a posse, he ran smack into Blackjack and his two outlaw companions. Gunfire erupted violently and both sides suffered wounds but Blackjack managed to escape. He did not draw rein until joining his brother Sam at the WS ranch, where some of the Wild Bunch were resting up.

On Christmas week the citizens of the now ghost town of 'Frisco celebrated with parties, dances and horse races. Blackjack led in a dozen well dressed strangers. The locals did not suspect the free spending, merry-making men as outlaws and probably couldn't have cared less what they were.

Blackjack brought in a stolen sorrel stallion that won every race the horse was entered in. That night while drunk he got into a poker game. His bad luck held until all were out of the game except Clay Cooper. They bucked each other and Blackjack was cleaned, losing even the sorrel stallion.

A month later Blackjack sent a friend to buy the stallion back for him but Cooper refused. Angry, Blackjack bragged in 'Frisco that the real owner would be around, if he didn't steal the stallion back beforehand.

Outlaw business took Blackjack elsewhere. The owner of the horse, a man named Hudson, claimed the stallion and repossessed it.

Passenger trains in Arizona and New Mexico were suddenly held up so regularly that Blackjack's gang, then coming into prominence, must have ridden directly from one railroad to the other.

The Ketchums were past masters at train robbery and the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroads lost heavily. Their strikes invariably went off without a hitch. Express car safes were so expertly and quickly blown open that it is certain Elzie Lay had joined

them especially for train robberies.

During the summer of 1897 the Ketchums returned to Mt. Baldy. The Colorado & Southern curved through Union County in the extreme corner of New Mexico into Texas near Texline.

After thoroughly studying the situation there Blackjack Ketchum decided to grab the Texas Flyer and sent out word for help.

As outlaws began arriving in camp the gang dropped down into Elizabethtown, spending almost all night long on a spree in Moore's fancy saloon.

Their lavish spending created a small boom in the little village. But that ended abruptly when the eight outlaws he needed were finally recruited. Blackjack took the gang east to the railroad just south of Folsom.

On the night of July 16 he walked into town, hiding near the depot. When the Texas Flyer arrived on time and started pulling out he caught onto the tender.

The train picked up speed before Blackjack dropped down into the cab and covered the engineer and fireman. A gentle voice told them to proceed on down the line until they spotted a lantern light. The train was ordered to stop on Twin Mountain curve, where saddled pack horses stood beside the right-of-way.

The engineer and fireman were conducted to the express car, which was opened on demand. The first try at blowing open the safe door failed. A second and larger set of explosives blew it off the hinges and also most of the express car roof.

Sacking more than $3,500, the gang pulled away from the crime scene towards Springer. By daylight a sixteen-man posse arrived in a special train to try and track them down.

After ten days of chousing around, all the posse managed to catch were seven small-time cattle thieves hiding in a canyon. And that happened by pure accident.

Butch Cassidy requested Blackjack that he bring some of his men north to Wyoming for a special job. On July 27, 1898, the robber crew took $100,000 in crisp new treasury notes from a Union Pacific flyer near Table Rock. The money shipment had been destined to the west coast to pay soldiers.

Four posses numbering more than a hundred men took after the leather pounding outlaws. They followed them across Red Desert into the little known Hay Stacks country.

The sheriffs, officials of the Pacific Express Company and Pinkerton detectives announced jubilantly that this time the Wild Bunch was caught. They couldn't possibly escape the terrible, waterless badlands.

But Blackjack Ketchum and Butch Cassidy knew the area by the square yard. They got through easily. It was the lawmen who got lost and tangled up.

Taking seven experienced outlaws, Blackjack moved deep into Arizona. The Santa Fe's California Limited was taken for $15,000 near Kingman. One month later the same railroad lost $26,000 in an express car robbery between Clovis, New Mexico and the Texas line.

Already packing a $5,000 reward on his head for capture, dead or alive, the heat was now really turned on Blackjack. The territories of Arizona and New Mexico, the states of Colorado, Wyoming and Montana wanted him badly. The express companies and railroads now raised the reward for Blackjack Ketchum to $10,000, the same amount as was posted for Butch Cassidy.

Having made good their escape into southern New Mexico, Blackjack and five of the gang rested up at the WS ranch again. With that attended to the bunch rode down into Chihuahua, Mexico. A bank was robbed of silver pesos and some gold, and a Mormon colony of an indefinite amount.

The Mormon settlers and Mexican *rurales* got after them quickly. By hard riding the outlaws were caught up with before they could recross the border back into New Mexico. Three were killed. One of them, the *rurales* claimed, was no less than Blackjack Ketchum.

While his demise was still being highly exaggerated, Blackjack and Sam Ketchum with one other desperado appeared in north-central Arizona. A bank in the rich copper mining town of Jerome was knocked off for the company payroll, some $50,000.

On reaching Alma once more, the outlaws learned that Pinkerton detectives had recently been snooping around. All outlaws at the WS were gone, so they rode on north to the Mt. Baldy hideout. Again they made merry in Elizabethtown. After a short spell most of the gang drifted elsewhere temporarily and only two remained in camp with the Ketchums.

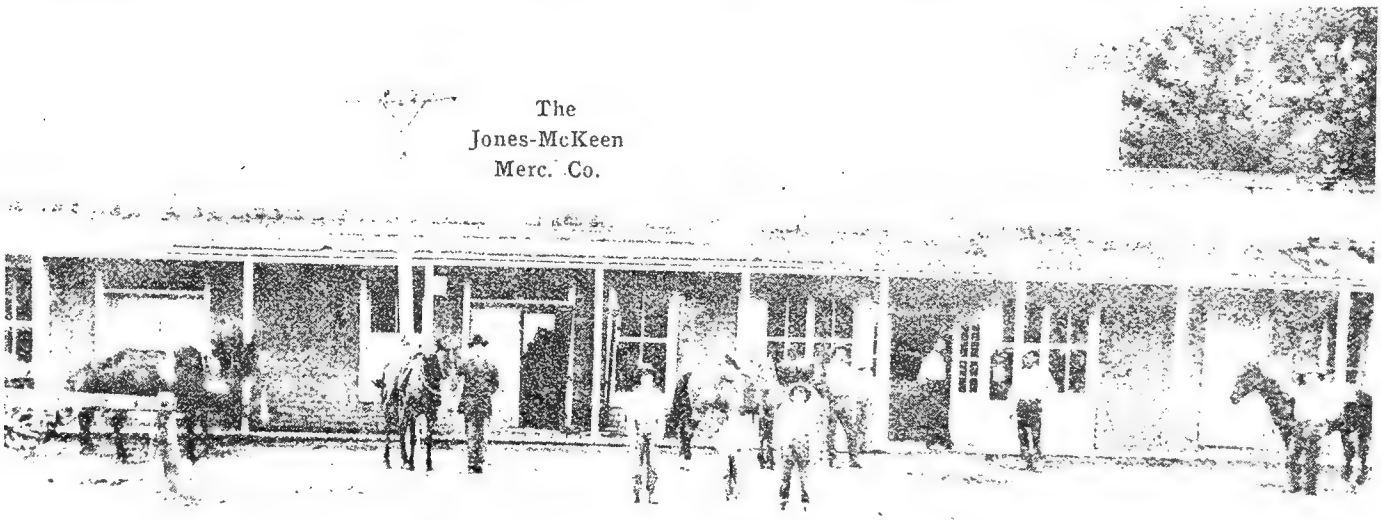
Down from the north came Butch Cassidy, Kid Curry, Elzie Lay and Deaf Charley Hanks. While plans were being formulated to hit the Colorado & Southern again, the gang spent their nights carousing in Elizabethtown.

A few nights before the planned train holdup a messenger arrived with urgent word for Blackjack Ketchum to come to Alma immediately. Some of his gang had regrouped there and were about to make a rich haul at Kingston. One of the mines there was ready to send out a large shipment of gold bullion which had accumulated while silver ores were sent away to be smeltered.

Blackjack could not make up his mind what to do. When he explained his dilemma to Butch Cassidy the outlaw chief shook his head.

"You could have a much better thing

Alma, New Mexico, where the Wild Bunch and Ketchum outlaws made merry. The Mogollon Mines were nearby.



The Jones-McKeen Merc. Co.

down there than we do here. You had better streak south and grab the gold, Tom."

Somewhat reluctantly Blackjack Ketchum headed south. Maybe he had a feeling of impending disaster about to catch up with him and Sam.

Butch Cassidy moved his outlaws into striking position July 10, 1899. It being Ketchum territory Sam was considered the leader for the robbery and get-away. Taking Kid Curry along, he boarded the train at a way station and sat in a dusty day coach while velvety night closed over New Mexico.

The train made stops, took on passengers and express and whistled on again into the night. At the station below Folsom Sam Ketchum and Kid Curry left the coach. In the dark they climbed into the engine cab with drawn guns.

The train proceeded on to a halt on Twin Mountain curve, almost in the exact spot where robbed before. The Wild Bunch waited and then took over when Sam Ketchum and Kid Curry brought the engineer and fireman out of the cab.

The Adams Express messenger refused to open the side door when told to do so. Threats of being blown up with the car failed to make him change his mind. Kid Curry then smashed the door open and pried it back with a crow bar while the others fired lead inside.

The nervy express messenger was collared, brought out and tied up. The safe was then easily blown open. Between fifty and seventy thousand dollars in coal mine payrolls was taken. The express company never did disclose the exact amount.

Minutes afterwards the Wild Bunch mounted and disappeared, yelling and shooting into the night in true western-gang style.

Posses of lawmen, railroad and express company officers took after them from every direction. The gang was trailed past Cimarron into Turkey Creek Canyon in the mountains, reaching there the night of July 18.

Knowing they were close behind the outlaws, the leading posse moved ahead. Their chief tracker, Ed Smith, carried a lighted lantern in order to see ground tracks. This was lethal carelessness. The posse headed into one of Kid Curry's well laid ambushes.

Smith was killed before the possemen knew they were in trouble. Brave Sheriff Ed Farr got it next. Of eleven members of the posse wounded by fast, accurate sharp shooting, U. S. Deputy Marshal H. M. Love died later.

Billy Reno proved the hero of the fight, exposing himself recklessly to rifle fire while dragging three gravely wounded men to safety.

A rain started falling that night. No tracks remained to be followed by the big posse the next morning.

It was not all a one-way exchange of lead. The possemen fired back. Elzie Lay suffered two wounds and Sam Ketchum had his arm shattered below the left shoulder.

On the get-away he became too weak to remain in the saddle and begged to be left behind. Believing that he was dying, Butch Cassidy placed him in as comfortable a position as possible and rode on with the gang.

Hours later, when he recovered a little strength, Sam hobbled and crawled to Ute Creek before succumbing to complete exhaustion. The following morning cowman J. H. McBride found him and collected the $5,000 reward on his head.

Given medical attention at McBride's ranch, Sam was removed to Trinidad by U. S. marshals for more medication, then lodged in the Santa Fe jail. His arm, amputated at the shoulder, did not heal and he died of blood poisoning on July 24th.

At Kingston Blackjack Ketchum discovered that his cohorts had made a bad mistake. The gold bullion had been shipped out a week before. Enroute back north to Mt. Baldy he heard of Sam's death. He thirsted to avenge his thirty-eight year old brother. Blackjack was then forty.

He decided to hold up the Texas Flyer single-handed. Leaving two horses and explosives four miles south of Folsom at Twin Mountain he walked into town. The night of August 16, 1899, Blackjack sneaked onto the engine tender as the train pulled out of the station.

At 10:30 he rammed a sixgun muzzle into the engineer's ribs and ordered the train stopped. As it ground to a halt Conductor Frank Harrington, who had been in both previous holdups at that identical place, suspected what was happening.

Grabbing a shotgun he ran forward accompanied by the brakeman. On reaching the express car he entered and almost stumbled over Clerk Bartlett who had been shot through the jaw, lying on the floor.

Peering out of the opened door, Harrington saw Blackjack standing on the ground ordering the engineer and fireman to cut the express car loose and move it ahead.

Aiming the shotgun, Harrington let the outlaw have a load of buckshot. Blackjack saw the muzzle in time to fire once, nicking the courageous conductor.

Staggering backward with right lower arm shattered, Blackjack Ketchum fell from sight into a patch of weeds. The train crew raced to their positions and highballed it on north. On reaching Trinidad Billy Reno and the county sheriff were informed. They began assembling a posse at once.

At sunup the next morning a brakeman posted on top of a freight train caboose saw Blackjack waving his

(continued on page 39)

Blackjack Ketchum was decapitated when hanged, due to stupid lengthening of the hangman's rope. Sheriff Salome Garcia is at left, behind the body and head.

Many of Zane Grey's most famous short stories pictured the wild predators of the untamed West. When "The Ladies Home Journal," in 1924 published "The Wolf Tracker," it marked another milestone in Zane Grey's meteoric career. The theme is as old, as timeless, as Life and Survival itself. A killer wolf who wouldn't be conquered, a hunter who wouldn't be denied—together they fought a war to the death in one of the most dramatic tales ever written. When you read a story in Zane Grey Western Magazine, you are reading a tale that has been acclaimed worthy of inclusion beside Grey himself, the greatest of them all. Reserve your next issue now.

You'll be glad you did!

THE EDITORS

The big gray killer wolf knew no law but the law of the wild, with Death the final act. The lean brown hunter nodded. It was time old Big Gray met his master. . .

THE WOLF TRACKER

By ZANE GREY

A Truly Remarkable Western Classic

THE HARD-RIDING cowmen of Adams' outfit returned to camp that last day of the fall round-up, weary and brush-torn, begrimed with dust and sweat, and loud in their acclaims against Old Gray, the "lofer" wolf, notorious from the Cibique across the black belt of rugged Arizona upland to Mount Wilson in New Mexico.

"Reckon the Tonto had seen the last of Old Gray's big tracks," said Benson, the hawk-eyed foreman, as he slipped the bridle of his horse.

"An' for why?" queried Banty Smith, the little arguing rooster of the outfit. "Ain't Old Gray young yet—just in his prime? Didn't we find four carcasses of full-grown steers he'd pulled down last April over on Webber Creek? Shore he hits for high country in summer. What for did you think he'd not show up when the frost come?"

"Aw, Banty, cain't you savvy Ben?" drawled a long, lean rider. "He was jest voicin' his hopes."

"Yep; Ben is that tender-hearted he'd weep over a locoed calf if it happened to wear his brand," remarked Tim Bender with a huge grin, as if he well knew he had acquitted himself wittily.

"Haw! Haw!" laughed another rider. "Old Gray has shore made some deppredashuns on Ben's stock of twenty head—most as much as one heifer."

"Kid me all you like, boys," replied Benson goodnaturedly. "Reckon I had no call to think Old Gray wouldn't come back. He's done that for years. But it's not onnatural to live in hopes. An' it's hard luck we had to run acrost his tracks an' his work the last day of the round-up. Only last night the boss was sayin' he hadn't heard anythin' about Old Gray for months."

"Nobody heard of anyone cashin' on that five thousand dollars reward for Old Gray's scalp either," replied Banty with sarcasm.

Thus after the manner of the range the cowboys volleyed badinage while they performed the last tasks of the day.

Two streams met below the pine-shaded bench where the camp was situated; and some of the boys strode down with towels and soap to attend to ablutions that one wash pan for the outfit made a matter of waiting. It was still clear daylight, though the sun had gone down behind a high timbered hill to the west. A rude log cabin stood above the fork of the streams, and near by the cook busied himself between his chuck wagon and the camp fire. Both the cool pine-scented air and the red-gold patches of brush on the hillside told of the late October.

Adams, the boss of the outfit, had ridden over from his Tonto ranch at Spring Valley. He was a sturdy, well-preserved man of sixty, sharp of eye, bronze of face, with the stamp of a self-made and prosperous rancher upon him.

"Ben, the boss is inquirin' about you," called Banty from the bench above the stream.

Whereupon the foreman clambered up the rocky slope, vigorously rubbing his ruddy face with a towel, and made his way to where Adams sat beside the

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camp fire. In all respects, except regarding Old Gray, Benson's report was one he knew would be gratifying. This naturally he reserved until after Adams had expressed his satisfaction. Then he supplemented the news of the wolf.

"That lofer!" ejaculated Adams in dismay. "Why, only the other day I heard from my pardner Barrett, an' he said the government hunters were trackin' Old Gray up Mount Wilson."

"Wal, boss, thet may be true," responded the foreman. "But Old Gray killed a yearlin' last night on the red ridge above Doubtful Canon. I know his tracks like I do my hoss'. We found four kills today an' I reckon all was the work of thet lofer. You don't need to see his tracks. He's shore a clean killer. An' sometimes he kills for the sake of killin'."

"I ain't sayin' I care about the money loss, though that old gray devil has cost me an' Barrett twenty-five hundred," replied Adams thoughtfully. "But he's such a bloody murderer, the most aggravatin' varmint I ever—"

"Huh! Who's the gazabo comin' down the trail?" interrupted Benson, pointing up the bench.

"Stranger to me," said Adams. "Anybody know him?"

One by one the cowboys disclaimed knowledge of the unusual figure approaching. At that distance he appeared to be a rather old man, slightly bowed. But a second glance showed his shoulders to be broad and his stride the wonderful one of a mountaineer.

He carried a pack on his back and a shiny carbine in his hand. His garb was ragged homespun, patched until it resembled a checkerboard.

"A stranger without a hoss!" exclaimed Banty, as if that was an amazingly singular thing.

The man approached the camp fire, and halted to lean the worn carbine against the woodpile. Then he unbuckled a strap round his breast, and lifted a rather heavy pack from his back, to deposit it on the ground. It appeared to be a pack rolled in a rubber-lined blanket, out of which protruded the ends of worn snowshoes. When he stepped to the camp fire he disclosed a strange physiognomy: the weather-beaten face of a matured man of the open, mapped by deep lines—strong, hard, a rugged mask, lighted by penetrating quiet eyes of gray.

"Howdy, stranger. Get down an' come in," welcomed Adams with the quaint, hearty greeting always resorted to by a Westerner.

"How do. I reckon I will," replied the man, extending big brown hands to the fire. "Are you Adams, the cattleman?"

"You've got me. But I can't just place you, stranger."

"Reckon not. I'm new in these parts. My name's Brink. I'm a tracker."

"Glad to meet you, Brink," replied Adams curiously. "These are some of my boys. Set down an' rest. I reckon you're tired an' hungry. We'll have grub soon. Tracker, you said? Now, I just don't savvy what you mean."

"I've been prospector, trapper, hunter, most everythin'," replied Brink as he took the seat offered. "But I reckon my callin' is to find tracks. Tracker of men, hosses, cattle, wild animals, specially sheep-killin' silvertips an' stock-killin' wolves."

"You don't say!" said Adams, suddenly shifting from genial curiosity to keen interest. "An' you're after that five thousand dollars we cattlemen offered for Old Gray's scalp?"

"Nope. I hadn't thought of the reward. I heard of it, up in Colorado, same time I heard of this wolf that's run amuck so long on these ranges. An' I've come down here to kill him."

Adams showed astonishment along with his interest, but his silence and expression did not approach the incredulity manifested by the men of his outfit. They were amiably nonplused as to the man's sanity. Nothing more than their response was needed to establish the reputation of Old Gray, the lofer wolf. But Brink did not see these indications; he was peering into the fire.

"So ho! You have?" exclaimed Adams, breaking the silence. "Brink, that's good of you. Would you mind tellin' us how you mean to set about killin' Old Gray?"

"Reckon I told you I was a tracker," rejoined Brink curtly.

"But, man, we've had every pack of hounds in two states on the track of that wolf."

"Is he on the range now?" asked Brink.

Adams motioned to his foreman to reply to this question. Benson made evident effort to be serious. "I seen his tracks less'n two hours ago. He killed a yearlin' last night."

At these words Brink turned his gaze from the fire to the speaker. It seemed one of passion. It changed, and only a gleam of eye attested to strange emotion under that seamed and lined mask of bronze. His gaze returned to the fire, and the big hands, that held palms open to the heat, now clasped each other, in strong and tense action. Only Adams took the man seriously, and his attitude restrained the merriment his riders certainly felt.

"Adams, would you mind tellin' me all you know about this wolf?" asked the stranger presently.

"Say, man," said Adams, still with good nature, "it wouldn't be polite to keep you from eatin' an' sleepin'."

"Old Gray has a history then?" inquired Brink.

"Humph! Reckon I couldn't tell you all about him in a week," said the cattleman emphatically.

"It wouldn't matter to me how long you'd take," said Brink thoughtfully.

At that Adams laughed outright; this queer individual had not in the least considered waste of time to a busy rancher. Manifestly he thought only of the notorious wolf. Adams eyed the man a long, speculative moment. Brink interested him. Brink's face and garb and pack were all extraordinarily different from what was usually met with on these ranges. He had arrived on foot, but he was not a tramp. Adams took keener note of the quiet face, the deep chest, the muscular hands, the wiry body and the powerful legs. No cowboy, for all his riding, ever had legs like these; the man was a walker.

These deductions, united with an amiability that was characteristic of Adams, persuaded him to satisfy the man's desire to hear about the wolf. "All right, Brink, I'll tell you somethin' of Old Gray—leastways till the cook calls us to come an' get it. There used to be a good many lofers—timber wolves we called them—in this country. But they're gettin' scarce. Naturally there are lots of stories in circulation about this particular wolf. I can't vouch for his parentage, or whether he has mixed blood. Seven or eight, maybe ten years ago some trapper lost a husky—one of

them regular Alaskan snow-sled dogs—over in the Mazatzals. Never found him.

"Some natives here claim Old Gray is a son of this husky, his mother bein' one of the range lofers. Another story is about a wolf escapin' from a circus over heah in a railroad wreck years ago. A young gray wolf got away. This escaped wolf might be Old Gray.

"The name Old Gray doesn't seem to fit this particular wolf, because it's misleadin'. He's gray—yes, almost white, but he's not old. Bill Everett, a range hand, saw this wolf first. Tellin' about it, he called him an old gray Jasper. The name stuck, though now you seldom hear the Jasper tacked on.

"From that time stories began to drift into camp an' town about the doin's of Old Gray. He was a killer. Cowboys an' hunters took to his trail with cow dogs an' bear hounds. But though they routed him out of his lairs an' chased him all over they never caught him. Trappers camped all the way from the Cibique to Mount Wilson tryin' to trap him. I never heard of Old Gray touchin' a trap.

"In summer Old Gray lit out for the mountains. In winter he took to the foothills an' ranges. I've heard cattlemen over in New Mexico say he had killed twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of stock. But that was years ago. It would be impossible now to estimate the loss to ranchers. Old Gray played at the game. He'd run through a bunch of stock, hamstringin' right an' left, until he had enough of his fun, then he'd pull down a yearlin', eat what he wanted an' travel on.

"He didn't always work alone. Sometimes he'd have several lofers with him. But Old Gray is a lone wolf. He didn't trust company. The government hunters have been tryin' to get him these several years. But so far as I know, Old Gray has never been scratched. My personal opinion is this: He's a magnificent wild brute, smarter than any dog; an' you know how intelligent dogs can be. Well, Old Gray is too savage, too wild, too keen to be caught by the ordinary means employed so far. There, Brink, is the plain, blunt facts."

"Much obliged," said Brink with a break in his rapt intensity. "Have you ever seen this lofer?"

"No, I never had the good luck," replied Adams. "Nor have many men. But Benson, here, has seen him."

"What's he look like?" asked Brink, turning eagerly to the foreman.

"Old Gray is about the purtiest wild varmint I ever clapped my eyes on," drawled Benson, slow and cool, as if to tantalize this wolf hunter.

"He's big—a heap bigger'n any lofer I ever saw before—an' he's gray all right, a light gray, with a black ring part round his neck, almost like a ruff. He's a bold cuss too. He stood watchin' me, knowin' darn well he was out of gunshot."

"Now what kind of a track does he make?"

"Just a wolf track bigger'n you ever seen before—almost as big as a hoss track. When you see it oncet you'll shore never forget."

"Where did you run across that track last?"

Benson squatted down before the fire, and with his hand smoothed a flat, clear place in the dust on which he began to trace lines. "Heah, foller up this creek till you come to a high falls. Climb up the slope on the right. You'll head out on a cedar an' piñon ridge. Halfway up this ridge from there you'll strike a trail. Foller it round under the bluff till you strike Old Gray's tracks; I seen them this mawnin', fresh as could be—sharp an' clean in the dust, makin' for the Rim."

Brink slowly rose from his scrutiny of the map. His penetrating gaze fixed on Adams.

"I'll kill your old gray wolf," he said.

His tone, his manner seemed infinitely more than his simple words. They all combined to make an effect that seemed indefinable, except in the case of Banty, who grew red in the face. The little cowboy enjoyed considerable reputation as a hunter, a reputation which, to his humiliation, had not been lived up to by his futile hunts after Old Gray.

"Aw, now—so you'll kill that lofer," he said in the most elaborate satire possible for a cowboy. "Well, Mr. Brink, would you mind tellin' us just when you'll perpetuate this execushun? We'll give a dance to celebrate. Say when you'll fetch his skin down—tomorrow around sunup, or mebbe next day, seein' you'll have to travel on Shanks' mare, or possiblee the day after."

Banty's drawling scorn might never have been spoken, for all the effect it had on the wolf hunter. Brink was beyond the levity of a cowboy.

"Reckon I can't say just when I'll kill Old Gray," he replied with something sonorous in his voice. "It might be any day, accordin' to luck. But if he's the wolf you-all say he is, it'll take long."

"You don't say!" spoke up Banty. "Well, by gosh, my walkin' gent, I figgered you had some Injun medicine that you could put on Old Gray's tail."

The cowboys roared. Brink showed no sign of appreciating the ridicule. Thoughtfully he bent again to the fire, and did not hear the cook's lusty call to supper.

"Never mind the boys," said Adams kindly, putting a hand on the bowed shoulder. "Come an' eat with us."

II

THE MORNING SUN had not yet melted the hoar frost from the brush when Brink halted in the trail before huge wolf tracks in the red dust.

"Same as any wolf tracks, only big," he soliloquized. "Biggest I ever saw even in Alaska."

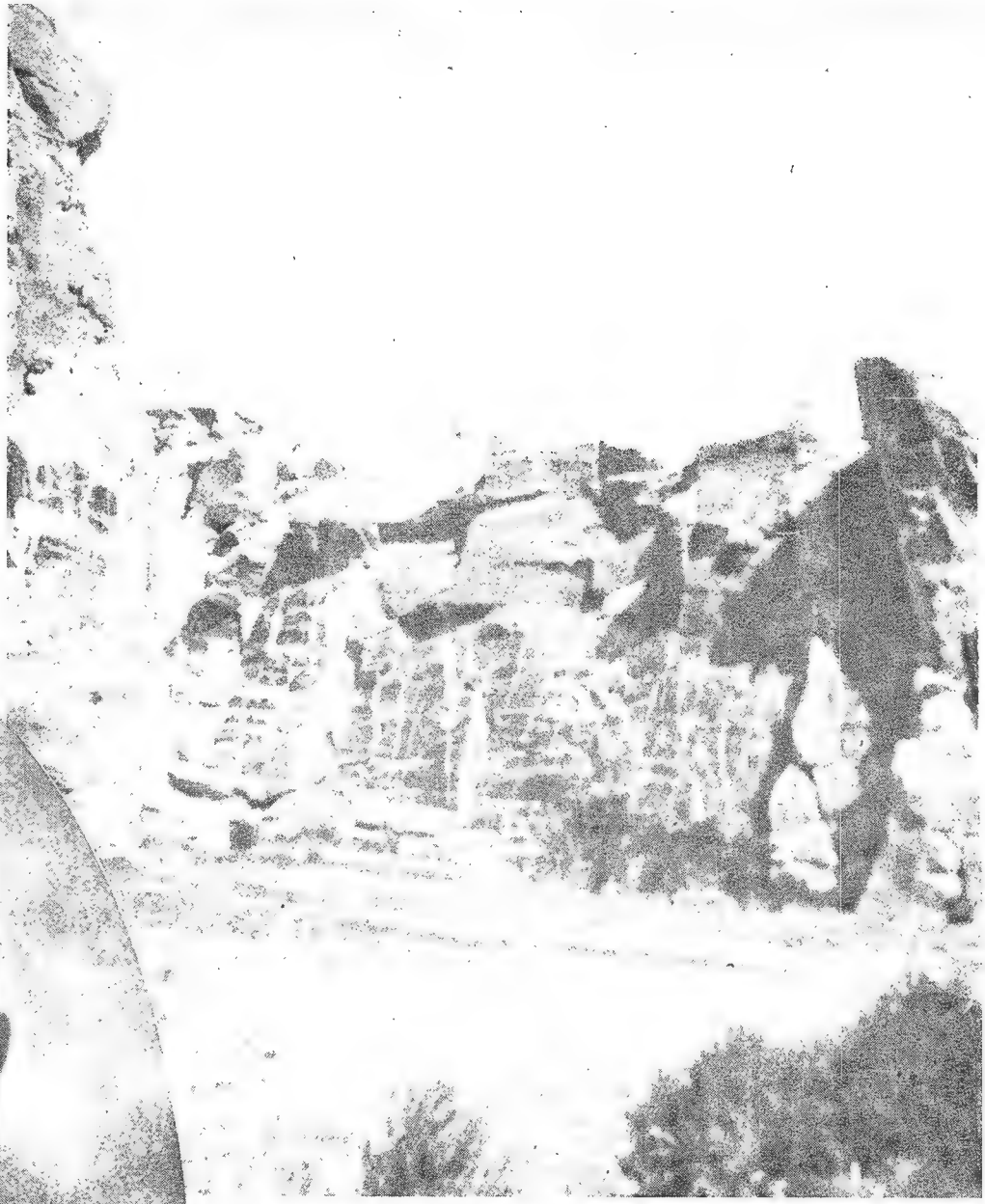
He leaned his shiny carbine against a pine sapling and lifted his pack from his shoulders, all the time with gaze riveted on the trail. Then, with head bent, he walked slowly along until he came to a place where all four tracks of the wolf showed plainly. Here Brink got to his knees, scrutinizing the imprints, photographing them on his inward eye, taking intent and grave stock of them. For moments he remained motionless. Presently he relaxed, and seating himself beside the trail seemed to revel in a strange, tranquil joy.

Brink's state of mind was a composite of a lifetime's feelings. As a boy of three he had captured his first wild creature—a squirrel that he tamed and loved and at last freed. All his early boyhood he had been a haunter of the woods and hills. At sixteen he had run away from school and home; at fifty he knew the West from the cold borders of the Yukon to the desert-walled Yaqui. Caravans, mining camps, freighting posts, towns and settlements, ranchers and camps had known him, though never for any length of time.

The tracks showed sharply in the dust. Old Gray had passed along there

(continued on page 61)

Somewhere deep in the Navajo Badlands, two kegs of gold lie hidden. Here is their tragic story.

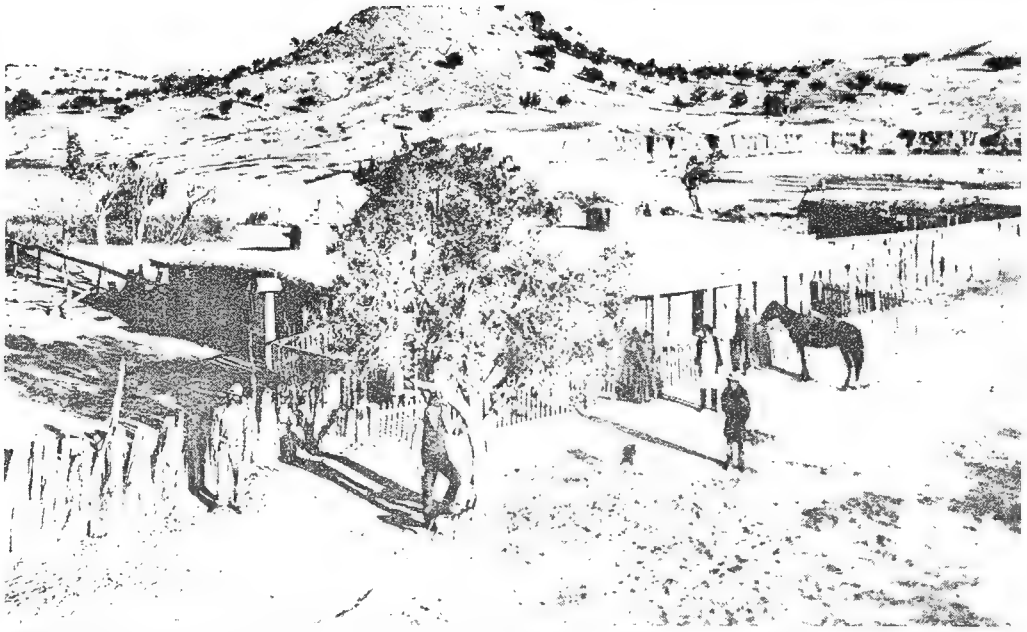


the keg of GOLD

By CALICO JONES

"Don" Lorenzo Hubbell

San Juan River Cliffs a few miles above where the gold was found and where the Utes crossed south to murder Wild Cat Jones.



The Hubbell trading post at Ganado in the 1880's and 1890's. Hubbell stands by the tree and his lifelong friend, Chief Many Horses, is to right in foreground.

"DON" LORENZO HUBBELL listened carefully to his Navajo informant speaking in his own language who said, "We found the white man's body, the one you sent to Old Age River to find *olla* for you. A Navajo-Piute not afraid of *chindi* buried it in the sand."

Hubbell had sent a prospector to the San Juan River looking for gold, which was what the Navajo said. Then he had been killed and an Indian not afraid of evil spirits buried the body.

In Navajo the rotund Hubbell asked, "What did you find in his camp?"

"Nothing, my friend. All had been taken."

"Did you see Blackgoat's Boy?"

"Was he there?"

Shrugging his shoulders, Hubbell did not reply. Some facts unknown to the Navajo were better left unmentioned.

By that year, 1889 Hubbell had become an inveterate hunter of valuable minerals on the Navajo Reservation. His trading post at Ganado was established by another man in 1876. While he served a two-year term and part of another as sheriff of Apache County, Arizona, his brother Charles operated the Ganado post after its purchase by the Hubbells.

Returning to Ganado with his family, Don Hubbell sought gold and silver anywhere in the Navajo country. His method was to hire prospectors or grubstake them to follow up clues he obtained from Navajos.

One of them came from Many Horses, the district chief who was his close friend. He told Hubbell that next to Chinle Creek, a tributary of the San Juan, was a wash dry most of the year. In it gold nuggets could be found large enough to pick up with the fingers.

"Wild Cat" Jones—probably not his real name—was a weazened, squint-eyes individual Hubbell had grubstaked and befriended several times. A deal was made with him to check on the gold nugget story almost directly north of Ganado and just across the Arizona border in Utah east of Chinle Creek a very short distance.

Not only had Jones been given plenty of grub and equipment, but the generous Hubbell also added fifty dollars in cash. Wild Cat claimed he would surely need it for expenses in Utah. Blackgoat's Boy was engaged to go along with him as guide.

When Hubbell heard that Wild Cat had been killed by rifle bullets and the body badly mutilated, he checked further. Investigation by agency Indian police disclosed the account to be quite true.

Messages dispatched by Navajos for Blackgoat's Boy to come in produced nothing. It was then feared that he had also been killed and his body thrown into some ravine or canyon.

Despite his physical handicaps—he was overweight—Hubbell decided to make the long ride north and did so with five Navajos who tended the stock and camp.

Although the area was very sparsely inhabited they found no difficulty locating Navajos who took them to Wild Cat's permanent camp which he had used while searching for the nuggets.

Navajos assured Hubbell, whom they called Nikitso—Little Mexican—that Ute Indians had come across the San Juan, robbed the camp and killed the white man. Blackgoat's Boy? *Houla!*—who knows?

Wild Cat's grave was found, and the body was buried deeper by the police. Search was made of all likely places where Blackgoat's Boy's body could have been disposed of.

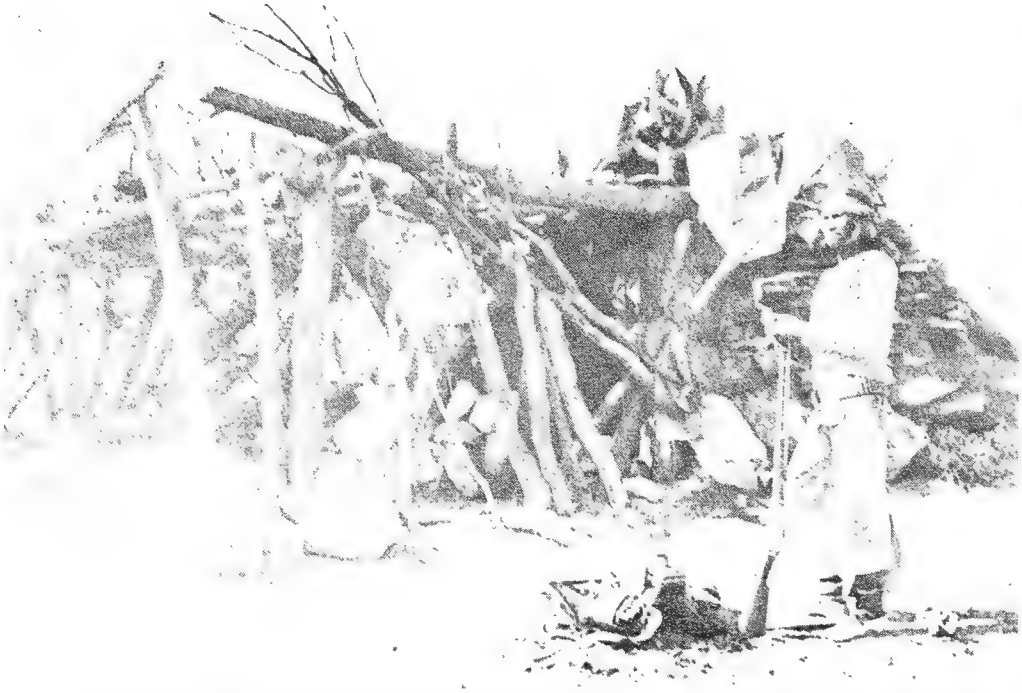
Most unhappy over the situation, Hubbell returned to Ganado with his retinue. Three days later Blackgoat's Boy showed up. His story electrified him.

To begin with, according to the eighteen-year-old youth, they had not gone directly north towards the San Juan. Instead Wild Cat left him with the equipment and stock in a camp west of Fort Defiance. After being absent a week the white man returned from Gallup, New Mexico, in a drunken condition. He brought back two five gallon kegs of whiskey.

They packed up and went on north. In each camp Wild Cat drank copiously but gave Blackgoat's Boy only half a tin cup of whiskey each night.

When they arrived at their destination one full keg and part of the other

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



The type of Navajos, mostly former scouts, who went north with Hubbell to where Wild Cat Jones was killed by the Utes. (Ben Wittick made this picture at that time at Ganado while staying with Hubbell)

Chinle Creek south of the Arizona-Utah border.

remained. Wild Cat continued drinking steadily each day and night.

After a week he sobered up enough to get down to business. They were camped at a seep spring above the dry wash where the gold nuggets were reported to be. The two went to work, Wild Cat showing Blackgoat's Boy how to dry wash gold. Almost at once, in a bed of gravelly sand they found nuggets so large, from bean size to that of a man's thumb, that they were easily picked up. They did this for two more weeks, piling the gold on a tarp in camp.

Wild Cat Jones then lost his enthusiasm for labor under a hot sun and returned to hitting the whiskey. Since his supply was fast running out he no longer wasted any on Blackgoat's Boy, who went out alone to gather up the gold.

Eventually running out of whiskey, Wild Cat wasted more time recovering from the shakes. He then returned to hunting for gold but now his attitude of being friendly towards Blackgoat's Boy changed. He became sullen and mean tempered and often raved at Blackgoat's Boy.

Around the first of December Blackgoat's Boy noticed the pile of raw gold had disappeared along with both empty whiskey kegs. This aroused his curiosity to a high pitch.

One night they brought in a pan full of nuggets which were left by the fire where their meals were cooked. It was there the next morning when Wild Cat sent him to work while he "cleaned up camp."

Suspicious, Blackgoat's Boy—as soon as he was out of sight—slipped back to camp. He found Wild Cat opening a hole in the ground in which one keg was buried. Into it was poured the pan of nuggets. While Wild Cat was covering the cache Blackgoat's Boy hastened back to work.

During the next five days he estimated that one keg had surely been filled. But what about the other one? Was it already filled and buried? Puzzled about this, Blackgoat's Boy sneaked back another morning to spy on Wild Cat. But he was discovered.

Wild Cat Jones wheeled around and came up with a sixgun smoking and blasting lead. Blackgoat's Boy dived down behind a sage brush covered sand knoll. More bullets thundered in his direction. He crawled some distance behind other small sand hills. He then suddenly took off afoot running for his life.

That afternoon, worn out he reached a Navajo hogan where he got food and slept the night. He then continued on west to relatives on Black Mountain, remaining there until returning to Ganado.

His excuse for not coming right back to Ganado was that the white man's word would be taken against his. Hubbell would surely be angry at him for not getting along with the drunken Wild Cat. He had just heard that Wild Cat was dead and immediately feared he would be accused of killing him for the livestock and supplies.

Hubbell assured him this was not the case. Many unshod pony tracks had been found around the camp site. They were traced on north across the San Juan.

"Can you take me to where you saw Wild Cat filling the keg with nuggets?" Hubbell asked hopefully. "There might be enough of them to repay me for the expense I have been out."

"I can show you where the keg is buried," Blackgoat's Boy assured him confidently. "That one is filled with gold."

"A fortune!" Hubbell exclaimed delightedly, and then grew cautious. "Maybe, that is if the nuggets are really gold." Actually he was certain they were because Wild Cat had been a long experienced prospector.

Hubbell brought in his son Lorenzo, Jr., and his long time friend Many Horses. Ten Navajos were recruited to make up the rather extensive expedition north.

Hubbell's father was a New England Yankee, so it was strange that Hubbell became a very pompous individual with the old type Spaniard's belief of his personal importance. He was the *el patron.* Period. This fact undoubtedly accounted for what followed.

The night before reaching the site of Wild Cat's last camp, lazing near the fire on a bed roll, Hubbell yelled at Blackgoat's Boy to bring him a cup of coffee.

Jumping to his feet, Blackgoat's Boy went to the pot on the coals. Pouring a metal cup full, he walked over to hand it to Hubbell. In some way the coffee spilled out on Hubbell's fancy black swallow tailed coat which he always wore summer or winter.

Leaping to his feet he cursed Blackgoat's Boy in two languages and kicked him to the ground in wild anger. Blackgoat's Boy got up slowly, more surprised than hurt, for this was not Hubbell's way to treat anyone. He was promptly kicked down again.

Hurrying over, Lorenzo, Jr., led his father back to a seat on the bed roll, soothing him in low voiced talk. Blackgoat's Boy slunk off to his sleeping blanket far away from camp.

By the following morning the sorry incident seemed to have been forgotten by everyone, but certainly not by Blackgoat's Boy, whose pride had been badly injured. Subsequent events tend to show that from then on he hated Hubbell thoroughly, avoiding him whenever possible. He had decided that the man was crazy.

The party finally reached Wild Cat's last camp. From there Blackgoat's Boy took them into a low sided wash west of where he said Wild Cat buried the oak keg and was seen pouring gold into the broken top.

A full day of careful searching produced no evidence of the cache. It just wasn't anywhere in the wide wash. In camp that night Blackgoat's Boy was taken to task while questioned at length. He remained steadfast to his original story, that this was the wash where he saw Wild Cat pouring nuggets into the buried keg.

Curiously, he did not seem the least distraught when the venerable Many Horses and then Hubbell accused him outright of lying. To the Navajo lying was a cardinal sin.

Blackgoat's Boy insisted that it had to be the right wash. Finally he shrugged his shoulders under their steady verbal pounding and remarked that maybe after all he could have been mistaken and the keg had been buried in the next wash beyond. It was searched for a full day but nothing was found.

After more haranguing Hubbell, Lorenzo and Many Horses went into the first wash east of the camp site but found nothing there either.

No amount of badgering Blackgoat's Boy—which was an error from the beginning—got more out of him. He again insisted stolidly that the first wash was the right one.

In turn he claimed it was in the east wash they recovered the nuggets. The entire bunch repaired there excitedly, and found not even one color.

The party returned to Ganado. Blackgoat's Boy departed unseen somewhere along the route.

It was Hubbell's belief that in time he could bring Blackgoat's Boy around to being friends again and get the actual truth. In that attempt he employed his father, Hosteen, to freight some of his merchandise from Gallup.

Two months later Blackgoat's Boy was with the freight train as driver of a wagon and trailer. The twenty Navajos along with the extensive outfit apparently left Gallup with plenty of rot gut whiskey.

In the first night camp, a mere six miles from the railroad town, they all got drunk. Woozy the next morning, the many teams of ponies were hooked to the wagons with trailers and started on for the reservation.

When part of his main wagon load loosened up, Blackgoat's Boy turned the driving lines over to another Navajo on the spring seat and went back to try securing the top ropes. Somehow he fell and a wheel ran over his chest. He died an hour later in camp.

This news affected Hubbell greatly. But he insisted that the buried keg of gold belonged to him—if he could find it. There might even be two filled kegs for the second remained unaccounted for.

In 1892, while in Gallup, he ran across Lamon White, a seasoned prospector he had known while sheriff of Apache County in 1884-1887.

When they first met, White had found a good silver claim on Silver Creek which he sold to Solomon Barth at St. Johns for $10,000. The fact that the claim never paid off did not detract from his ability as a prospector. In fact Hubbell admired him for being an astute man.

The small, grizzled prospector was propositioned in Gallup to go to Ganado with Hubbell, who told him the entire story.

Saying that he needed to go into the vast Navajo country anyway, White promised to come along later with his three Missouri mules, one of which he rode. He reached Ganado and the Hubbell post that same summer.

LAMON WHITE. (A large number of old timers were copied from a book published in 1911, 250 copies, only one I know of now in existence and it was rained on and wet, hence the funny looking marks on all those I copied out of the book.)

During the next few days Hubbell gave him further details of the affair up north and south of the San Juan. Many Horses was called in and in turn described the wash where the original nuggets, only a few, were purported to have been found back in 1882.

Hubbell at that time was in financial straits. He asked White if the keg of gold might be worth around a million dollars. He was sure that Wild Cat had buried a full keg with the intention of beating him out of a great fortune and probably the second partly-filled one.

A five gallon keg of gold worth a million dollars? White shook his head.

"Mr. Hubbell, it wouldn't be worth that much. I don't know whether it would come to anywhere near half that, but it certainly must have been a great lot. What interests me most is where Wild Cat and the Indian got it. There could be millions in the gravel beds of that wash, like those at Ehrenberg and La Paz. I'll go along with you and split. Okay, Mr. Hubbell?"

Most anxious to make a great find of gold Hubbell was generous, offering him grub and money.

White said, "I handle a deal like this on my own. I expect to be treated fairly and will render the same consideration. I will go up there on your information and look around. There shouldn't be too much difficulty in tracing all this down."

White pulled out, traveling north and across the Utah-Arizona border by easy

stages. Working by description of the area given by Hubbell it took him only two days to find Wild Cat's now vanished camp site. He next inspected the dry washes that had been searched by the two Hubbell expeditions.

As he later told Hubbell their naivete amused him. In the first wash west he found where a keg had been buried and later removed. Wild Cat had been an old frontiersman so he dug the hole to fit the keg exactly. After removing it later he crammed the excavation with stones and covered the surface to appear like the nearby surroundings.

His next discovery was that lower down the east wash, where the banks spread apart and vanished entirely in a flat, there was gold.

After picking up some twenty-odd pounds of nuggets White returned to hunting the keg of gold, or the missing one. Half ot it as his share would be considerable.

His search method was to survey the surrounding terrain and guess at what an old frontiersman would do. Invariably they descended high ground to make a cache in a hidden place, especially in a "hole". There were several reasons for this, to keep from being seen at work, to better camouflage the site and to be able to find it again. Therefore the re-caching of at least the keg known to be filled with gold was either to the north or south of the camp site. The first cache west had been a blind and only temporary, just in case Blackgoat's Boy had orders from Hubbell to keep an eye on him and the gold.

Making the first hunt north in a straight line and then fanning out, White came onto nothing after a full week of careful searching. Another week was wasted spreading out the same pattern southward.

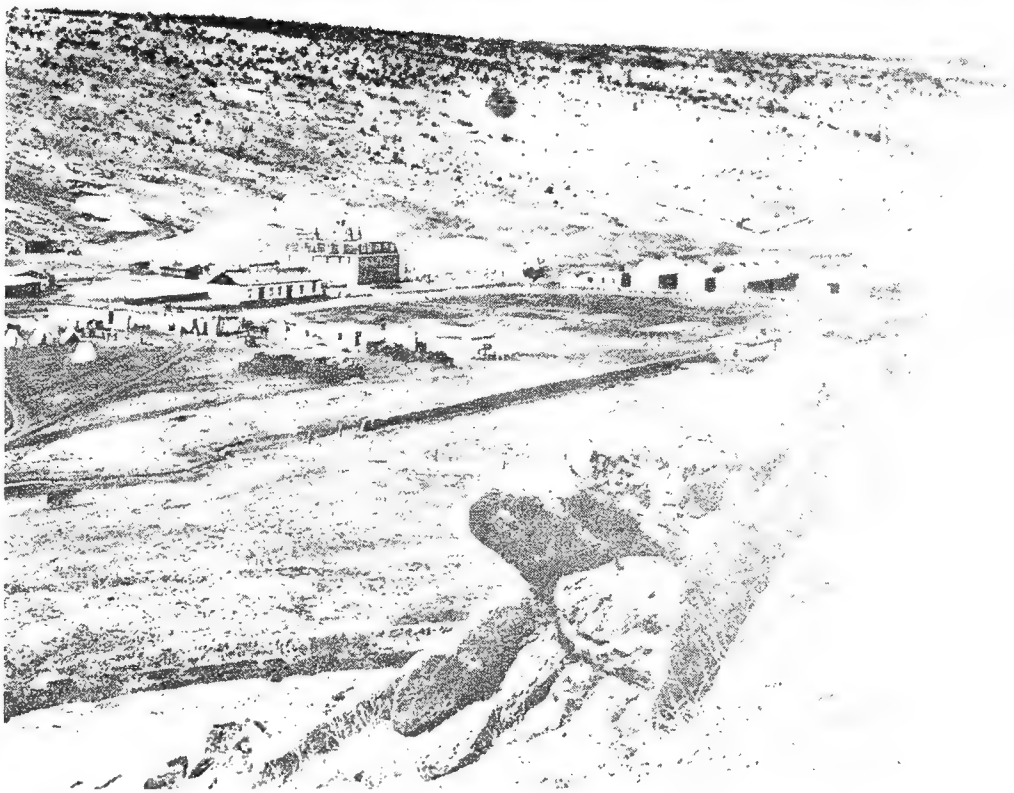
Each series of searches was a mile and a half in length. He did not figure that Wild Cat went even that far, maybe only a couple of hundred yards to make the cache, wiping out his sign.

Wild Cat might have even reburied one or both kegs right in camp. Not overlooking that possibility White dug out the old fire bed. Nothing. The weight of that much gold in a keg was also a problem. If full, no man could possibly have packed it to the first cache. Therefore if moved any distance it had been done by several carries or by a pack burro. This would have been done to the final hiding place after running Blackgoat's Boy away.

White's next tests were around the empty cache, with no results whatever.

Since he had brought along only a month's supply of grub, White was now out. Of necessity he had to replenish his store. Accordingly he packed the nuggets and returned to Ganado.

When Hubbell saw the gold and they divided it by weight, he was elated to the heighths. He expressed confidence they would soon be millionaires. Immediately he set about making plans to return north with White, in his usual grand style.



Fort Defiance Navajo agency from where tribal police were sent north to investigate Wild Cat Jones' murder.

However, a violent rainstorm delayed them five days. The worst rain in many years fell all over the usually dry, semi-arid country. When the party of ten left Ganado the ground was still muddy; red, boggy mud.

Camp was established on the old site, near Wild Cat's grave. First of all Hubbell wanted to see the gravel and sand beds from which White obtained the nuggets.

The entire group went down into the lower end of the east wash in great jubilation that they were going to pick up large nuggets with their hands.

Leading the others, White came up onto the break-over from which he could see the flat below the wash, halting in sheer disbelief. Some water still trickled through the wash but every gravel and sand bed had been washed out four feet deep by a torrential flood, even in the flood flat, down to bare rock!

The debacle caused a long period of speculation. The men strung out all along the wash and nowhere found a single nugget caught fast in a seam of the horizontal stone surface. The wash had been cleaned out all the way into Chinle Creek, only bare surfaces remaining.

The next day, refusing to believe the extreme calamity, mud, sand and gravel was panned from the sides. Over an expanse of three miles less than a dozen very small nuggets of gold came to light. There wasn't any worthwhile deposit to warrant placering.

The next ten days were spent searching almost every square foot of the area for either of the whiskey kegs. White described carefully how he believed it had been done, according to the craft of the old mountain men. But not even the eagle sharp eyes of the Navajos detected any evidence of a cache.

The very unhappy Don Hubbell brought his party back to Ganado.

In subsequent years the story of that gold grew into impossible legends.

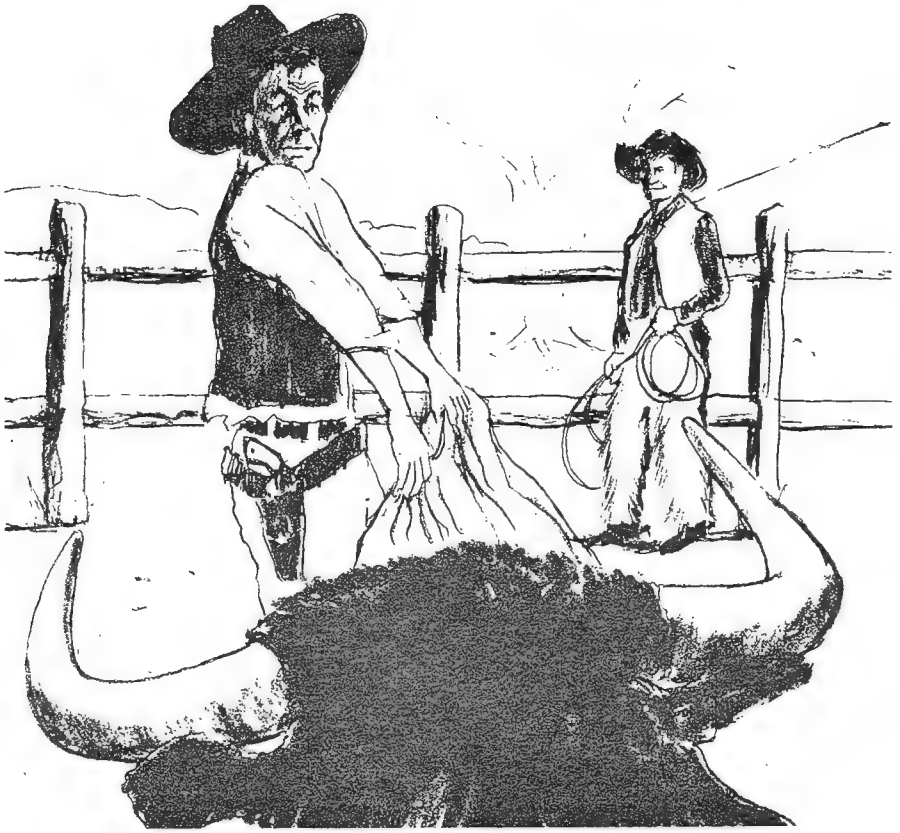
During the last years of his life Hubbell, who died in 1931, often shook his head in a puzzled manner while relating how he almost became a millionaire overnight.

He would say, "You know, we did not dig into that grave to make sure Wild Cat Jones was buried there. Although the Navajo police reburied the body, they said it was that of a white man because they had been told so. None of them knew Wild Cat Jones. Had never seen him.

"The body was badly decomposed so maybe the police made the mistake of thinking a Ute killed by Wild Cat was him. Only the Navajo-Piute actually

(continued on page 39)

THE TEXAS TOREADOR



Untamed, born without fear, he could handle anything that roamed the range. But—a bullet from a Colt .45?

By TOM CURRY

LEW YAWNCY knew the trouble wouldn't have come on them if Danny Hale hadn't insisted on going to that bullfight. Or if Danny wasn't so smart he read everything, even books. But that was the reason Yawncy so admired his pardner.

They were close friends—the slim, wiry Dan Hale, a bronco buster; Lew Yawncy, dumpy of build, a genius with the lariat. On Old Man Mack's Square M, one hundred miles from El Paso, they snared and broke wild mustangs running in the hills.

They'd worked mighty hard, taken their pay, and ridden off in the slack season for their vacation. "We'll cross the Rio to Juarez," Hale told Yawncy. "Them Mex card sharps ain't as keen as the ones in Texas. I've studied how to win at stud poker. We can't lose."

Lew Yawncy nodded. What Danny Hale said was gospel. Even when they'd lost their stake, Yawncy's faith wasn't shaken.

Hale led Yawncy to the bullfight, where they watched a toreador with a waxed mustache dance around with a cape and pigsticker. Hale kept sniffing. He said, "Shucks, I've seen longhorns could give that bull a mile start and beat him to a cow!" He kept studying the program, which told all about bullfighting.

Yawncy was relieved when they started home. The fact they were broke was nothing. They'd save their pay for another spree.

On the way home, they slept rolled in their blankets on the ground, eating from their saddlebags. They had their own horses, Hale a skittery buckskin who would throw anyone but Danny, while Yawncy's dun gelding was matter-of-fact and knew his business, as did his owner.

They reached Square M range, the ranch buildings over the next rise. Bunches of cattle grazed nearby. Hale was less talkative than usual but Yawncy didn't mind; all he wanted was to be with his pard.

Finally Hale said, "I can do better than that Mex toreador. That program says the bull don't go for the man, he follows the cape."

"It looked sort of dangerous to me," said Yawncy, idly.

Hale reined off and Yawncy trailed him faithfully. Even when Hale took out the large, bright red bandanna he'd bought in Juarez, the roper didn't catch on.

"Where we going?" Yawncy asked mildly.

Hale didn't answer but trotted the buckskin toward a small gather of cows. Most of them moved away.

One didn't. He raised his head, swishing his tail and glaring insolently as they approached closer and drew up. He was an old range bull, dark-brown of hide, tinges of dusky yellow on his lean belly and snout. Long, needle-sharp horns stuck straight out from his skull.

"What you aim to do?" asked Yawncy, seeing Hale about to dismount.

"I aim to prove what fakers toreadors are."

"You know a range bull'll kill a man afoot!"

"He'll never touch me. A bull follows the cape, the book says. And I'm a sight quicker on my feet than that Mex prancer. Don't worry."

"But—that's Beelzebub! I seen him stomp and gore a big cougar to death. He's a murderer!"

No use. Hale jumped down, ground-tying the buckskin. Red bandanna ready, he walked straight toward Beelzebub, who seemed as startled as Yawncy. The bull blinked, snorted, pawed the sandy earth. He shook his long-horned head as though trying to figure out the play.

Finally Beelzebub began moving. The appalled Yawncy, without realizing what he was doing as he watched the awful scene, slipped his coiled lariat off the hook.

Danny Hale raised his left hand in a graceful arc over his Stetson, as he'd seen the toreador do. He waved the crimson bandanna as far out to the right as he could.

Beelzebub, snorting fire, picked up speed as he charged. The huge animal was almost on Hale when the bronc peeler whirled, so the pointed horn, instead of disemboweling the man, slashed into Hale's rear. There was a violent collision as a ton of beef hit Danny's body, knocking him flat. Beelzebub ran right over the prostrate man. His impetus kept him going for some yards. He slid to stop, turned and came back for the kill, bellowing his fury.

Yawncy's loop settled over the brawny neck. The dun swerved, the snub on the horn slipping from the shocking weight, but Beelzebub was checked. The bull turned his rage on the horseman, forgetting Hale and charging the dun, murder in mind. The trained cowpony sidestepped, and as Beelzebub passed within a few feet, Yawncy put a bullet from his .45 Colt into the heaving animal's flank. It was no more than a crease, but the outraged bull let out an

anguished roar and fled in utter discomforture down the corral. Hale lay unmoving, and Yawncy had no way to safely secure the bull and dared not take chances until the bull was out of sight.

In a jiffy, Yawncy squatted by his pard. "Danny! You ain't dead, are you?"

The bronc peeler's whipcord pants had been ripped wide open and blood gushed from a long, jagged slash in Hale's buttock.

Quickly, Yawncy found a spare undershirt in his pack and bandaged the wound as well as he could on the spot. He was immensely relieved as Danny spat grit from his bruised lips and began cursing. He was saying something, and finally Yawncy made it out: "That fool bull went for me, instead of the cape!"

"He—he never read the rules," stammered Yawncy. He tried to help Hale up but his friend snarled and rose by himself, limping toward the nervous buckskin. Obviously, Hale couldn't sit a saddle.

An hour later, Yawncy rode in to the Square M on his dun, leading the buckskin. Hale lay ignominiously on his belly across the saddle, and the buckskin was most uneasy, for he wasn't used to this type of riding. However, Yawncy had controlled him with a lead-rope.

Old Man Mack, whose white whiskers had once been almost as red as Hale's new bandanna, with hair to match, stared at the bizarre scene as Yawncy helped his pard down and secured the horses till he had time to see to them. The roper trotted by his limping friend to the bunkhouse, where the groaning Danny Hale lay down—on his stomach—in his bed.

Yawncy found a pair of shears used to cut rawhide and sliced away the seat of the ruined trousers. He turned, meaning to go for clean bandages and an antiseptic, when Old Man Mack charged in the door. "What in blue blazes!" he bawled.

When Yawncy explained, Mack really exploded. He called Hale every kind of damn fool invented. "Any jackass has savvy enough not to go afoot among range cattle! You can't ride for weeks and what the hell use is a peeler who can't sit his saddle! If you think you can dawdle around here and eat my grub, you're loco, and nobody stupid as you stays on my spread. You're fired!"

"I quit," said Yawncy, but Mack hardly heard, as he turned on the roper, bellowing like Beelzebub had. "As for you, you hurt my favorite range bull! You could've killed him. I bet he sired three thousand calves, yessir."

"Boss, he was getting old, though, like you; he wasn't the man he used to be," argued Yawncy. "Anyway, he ain't hurt none."

"You're through, too, Yawncy," and the rancher's face was so crimson, the roper thought he was going to have a stroke.

"I already quit," murmured Yawncy.

"You drew your time 'fore you left on your run," said Mack. "I don't owe you a peso. I give you twenty four hours to be off my land, then I'll add a load of birdshot to your misery." Mack turned and stamped out.

Next morning, the two partners rode off; rather, Yawncy rode, while Hale draped over his saddle, head hanging down one side, feet over the other, Yawncy keeping a short lead on the buckskin.

Outside Creeksville, the nearest small settlement, Hale insisted on sliding off and walking in. They rail-hitched their mounts in the center. "What now?" asked Yawncy.

"To the bank. I got twenty-five dollars deposited there."

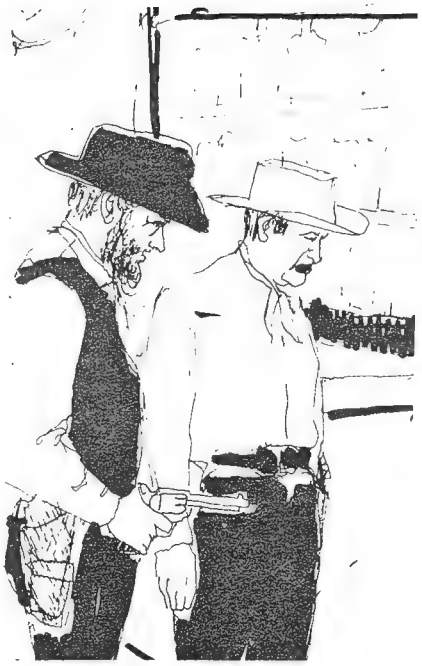
Yawncy was astounded. He'd never known a waddy who had a bank account. Ranchers, yes, but not ordinary cowboys. But Danny Hale was different.

"I'll drink up the whole amount and then go to hell!" declared Hale.

Lew Yawncy trailed his pard into the bank, and waited, leaning against the wall as Hale started over to the counter. A teller and the owner, Ben Oaks, were on duty, and the safe was open behind them.

Two strangers Yawncy had never seen trotted through the front door. They had bandannas pulled up to their eyes and cocked Colts in hand. They hustled to the counter, brandishing the hoglegs. "Empty that safe and stuff the money into this gunnysack," ordered the leader, a bigboned man with untidy black hair showing under his hat. "We'll shoot anybody gets ambitious!"

He snarled at Hale, "Siddown, you, put your hands over your head." He



gave Danny a sudden, hard shove. Hale lost his balance and sat down hard on the wooden floor.

"Ye-ow!" Yawncy had never heard such a howl of anguish as his friend landed on his painful, torn rump.

Hale came up like a jumping jack, eyes flaming red with rage. As the bandit swung his gun to shoot, Hale put a bullet through his gizzard and the thief went down. A breath later, Yawncy plugged the second one, who was about to riddle Hale.

Ben Oaks snatched up a double-barreled shotgun and hustled round the end of the counter to cover the outlaws, but they were through, all the fight shocked out of them. Yawncy took their guns while the teller hurried away to fetch the town marshal.

"You're a hero, Hale," complimented Oaks. "Real guts, that's what you got. I had a extra big money shipment today and these cusses were after it. Now see here, a couple of big outfits are coming into this region, and I'll have more cash on hand than ever. I need to have a regular guard on duty and you're the man for the job!"

"What does it intail?" inquired Hale.

For a moment Yawncy thought Hale was talking about his sore backside, but then he realized "intail" was another fancy word Danny had learned from a book, and he swelled with pride. Mr. Oaks knew what it meant, and said, "You just stand in here and make sure no robbers hold us up." He beamed at Hale.

"Stand? Well, I hate sitting around but I don't mind standing," agreed Hale. "Yawncy can lend a hand."

So that's how the top bronc peeler and star roper of ten Texas counties entered the banking profession, until Danny Hale's wound healed and he had another brilliant idea. ●

Cotton Pickin' Marshal

(continued from page 13)

detachment of Texas Rangers, asking for a conference on Red River. When Madsen arrived to meet him he learned that the rangers had crossed the river into the territory in hot pursuit of the badly wanted Red Buck Waightman and a former Texas undersheriff named Beckman.

"We really have no business being on this side of the river, you know," the ranger sergeant explained. "But we want that Beckman plumb bad!"

"You are all sworn in as deputy marshals right now," Madsen replied.

Pursuit of the fugitives was resumed and they were traced into Comanche country. Overhauled, the pair of killers turned like cornered rats. The rangers lived up to their vaunted reputation of being crack shots. Beckman was killed at long range. Though wounded, Waightman managed to escape before they could get close.

"He belongs to you now," the ranger sergeant informed Madsen. "We'll give you a receipt for the body of *our* man and take the body back to Texas."

Left alone, Madsen had to waste a little time forming a posse. Taking up Waightman's tracks with Indian scouts they followed northwest to near Arapaho. The scouts located him in a dugout on the afternoon of October 2, 1895.

The hole into the ground was surrounded just before Waightman appeared from it carrying a water bucket. Abruptly he halted, sniffing the air as though he could actually smell officers around him.

Giving no opportunity to be called on to surrender, he dropped the bucket and produced two lead spouting sixguns. In facing Waightsman, the most dangerous killer of all outlaws ever to run with the Doolin gang, the officers took no chances.

All their guns crashed simultaneously. Waightman was dead before his body flopped on the ground like a sack of feed oats.

While pursuing, killing or capturing other outlaws, Cris Madsen never lost sight of the purpose for which he was appointed. Many tips were furnished him and many clues ferreted out by him. If one of a wanted gang was thus located in another marshal's territory Madsen always passed on the information.

By co-ordinated work Doolin was captured in Arkansas, broke out of jail and then was shot to death while attempting to escape. One by one other members of the gang were shot dead. All except Arkansas Tom Doughtery, who was sent to the penitentiary, paroled at last and then killed while trying to rob a Missouri bank in 1924.

By late 1897 the long riders were no more in the Oklahoma and Indian territories. That year Madsen was transferred to the western district of Missouri. Maggie and the children went along with him this time.

In Missouri, his beloved Maggie, who had been ailing for some time, became worse. Diagnosing her disease as tuberculosis, doctors informed him that the climate in Oklahoma would be best for her.

Madsen asked for a transfer to the western district of Oklahoma Territory. His request was honored, and as a U. S. Deputy Marshal he served under Marshal John Abernathy.

But the change of climate did not benefit Maggie. She died May 2, 1898 and was buried in the little country cemetery at Yukon.

The Spanish-American War had broken out. In his grief Cris Madsen resigned as a deputy marshal. Enlisting in the Rough Riders he went with them to Cuba as quartermaster. Contracting yellow fever he returned home at the end of the war, a very sick man and seventy five pounds lighter.

After recuperating for three months on his farm, the sunshine and fresh air put him on his feet again. Since his sons could easily handle the farm and ranch work he felt the need of doing something.

He went to see Marshal Abernathy, and was taken on as a deputy. Stationed at Ardmore north of Red River, the Texas border, his principal criminal work was running down bootleggers, stock thieves and criminals fleeing just ahead of the Texas Rangers.

In 1910 William Cade was appointed U. S. Marshal for the then state of Oklahoma by President Taft, replacing Abernathy. While Cade waited to assume the job Cris Madsen acted as marshal until relieved. On Cade's request he continued serving as a deputy until 1913.

At the time of his retirement the inclement weather, hard rides, belt tightening when no food available and the generally tough life of his gun-smoke years hunting outlaws began taking toll.

When World War I came along he tried to enlist. But the old warrior who had smelled powder smoke on three continents was considerably too old and was rejected.

He began going blind and fell one day, breaking his left hip. Taken to the Masonic Hospital in Guthrie, gallant Cris Madsen died there January 9, 1944 at the age 93.

He was buried beside Maggie in the little cemetery at Yukon. ●

Bloody Apache Pass

(continued from page 8)

"*Mister* Cremony," he began sternly, "a man riding a horse makes a large and splendid target for the savages. The troopers would be slain to the last man in a matter of minutes. We cannot risk your men being killed so uselessly. We will need them even worse over in New Mexico. The answer to your request is *no!*"

Cremony and his men were most anxious to take part in the fight for Apache Pass. It had been a desperate one, yet would now soon end. They considered themselves abused by being ordered to remain in the rear.

Asking Lieutenant Tom Muller to intercede with Roberts in his behalf, Cremony's request was denied a second time.

Said Roberts, "The infantry and the howitzers are making quick work of the savages as they did before. The pass will be cleared in another half hour. There will be few casualties, whereas the cavalry would take a heavy loss."

After another dozen rounds from the howitzers the Apaches were again seen fleeing. They could not stand the bursting shells that killed them in bunches. The infantry had moved in and when the shelling ceased they completed mopping up and recovered the life giving springs.

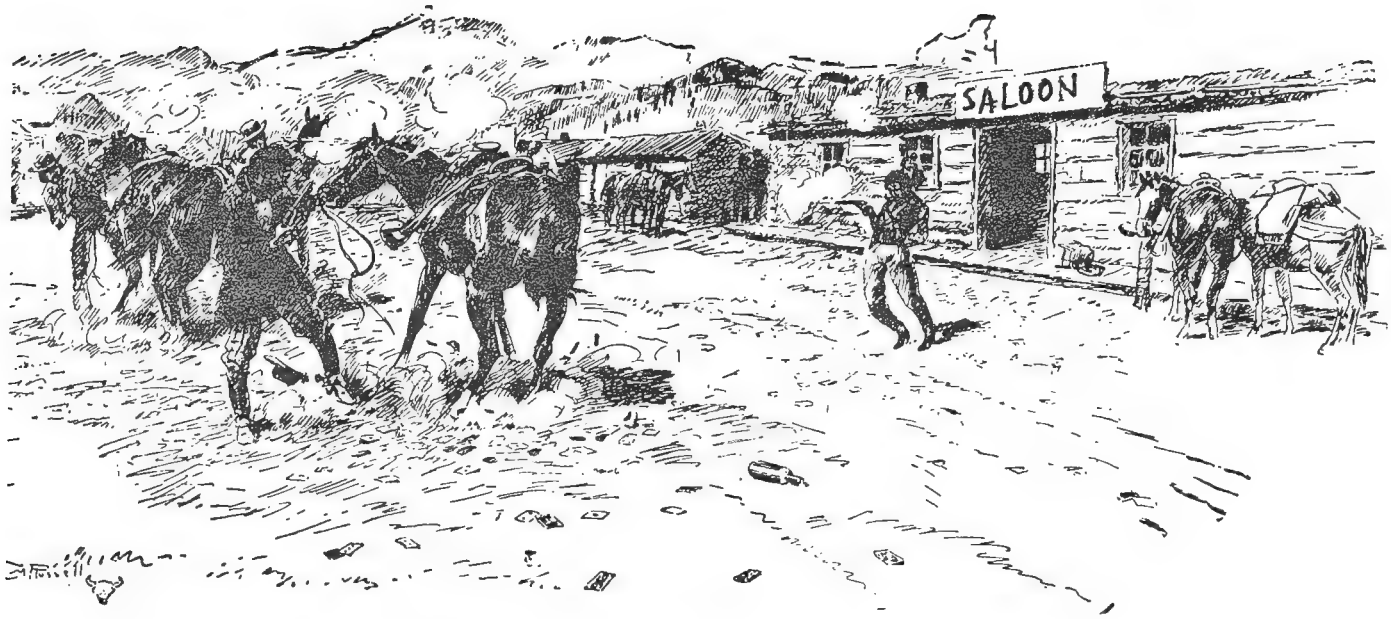
In relays men and animals were watered. A rest overnight followed. When watering was done again, all the barrels and canteens were soon filled. The California advance column then proceeded eastward for New Mexico.

Cochise and Mangas Colorado were bitter. Their men could not cope with the howitzers and they considered their use against them an unfair advantage. This first artillery used fighting them was fear inspiring, just as later the Gatling gun, mounted in a wagon bed, caught Apaches by surprise and mowed them down.

Another column of California volunteers coming along behind this command left a detachment to hold the pass. Considered the most dangerous ambush site on the California road, Fort Bowie was established at the eastern portal.

The thirteen men of Company A left as guards at the stage station were joined by about one hundred men of the 5th Infantry July 28, 1862.

It was these California volunteers, under Lieutenant Theodore A. Coult, who built the fort that was first named Camp Bowie. In succeeding years it became widely known as a frontier bastion and saw its greatest service during the campaigns against Geronimo.



GUNMAN'S SAVVY

by CLARENCE ALVA POWELL

JOHN STAFFORD said, No. This is one I have no doubt about.

How can you know it, John, Gale asked, mopping the bar vigorously, beads of perspiration on his brow.

They had long been friends, had ridden the long trails together, faced danger a time or two in the past and Gale, because he carried a bullet close to his heart, had turned to lighter chores. That was why he tended bar at the Dollar Saloon.

It's something inside, Stafford explained. Not anything to do with the mind. I guess it might be called a feeling, maybe not even that. I just know it at the time and that's about all there is to it.

You know, Gale reminded. The Kid has been moving fast, got himself a reputation. Two years ago nobody had ever heard about him. But look what he's done the last six months.

I know all about the Kid, Stafford said wearily. He's killed six men and that's about one a month.

All good men, too, Gale persisted. Everyone of them men that had their own way with a gun, Al Meade and Slim Grove among the best in the country.

I knew them both, Stafford said thoughtfully, flicking the ash from his cigaret. Both fine men. We used to talk about which one of us might be the fastest with a gun. We never did have any answers and that was because we didn't know.

How about that feeling you have, Gale asked, not derisively but earnestly. How do you figure that.

I get that feeling only when I know I'm going to face a man.

That damned Durango Kid was greased lightning with a gun and everybody knew it.

Damn, Gale swore. And by that time you couldn't back out, not even if you wanted to unless you showed yellow.

That's about it, Stafford admitted.

Gale stared at his friend with awe, and also with some concern. Do you mean to say, he asked, that you had that feeling every time you killed a man. He didn't mention the number of men that Stafford had killed but had always wondered about the actual count. It was rumored to be seventeen or eighteen.

No, Stafford told him. Not any more than you did that day when you killed Steve Prince. Prince tried to dry-gulch you, missed his first shot and you finally got him. There wasn't any time for feelings, maybe anger, fear or excitement but not the feeling that comes to you when you're waiting for a quick-draw shoot-out. The other three you got were sudden the same way. Some of mine were like that.

I see, Gale nodded. And I reckon you're right. But I do have a question.

Yeah, John Stafford answered slowly. He didn't mind the questions, not from Gale. He knew that Gale was lonesome for the old times, before Joe Pike put that bullet in his chest, and that this was by way of feeling close to things, like he wasn't finished and out of the picture.

Take the Kid down the street, Gale said. He's at Smolask's now, drinking. He rode in here looking for you, telling everybody you're afraid of him and that he can beat you to the draw. What about him. What kind of feeling does he have.

I don't know, Stafford said earnestly. I've wondered some about it, today. He may be too young, too much of an upstart and too cocksure of himself to give it any thought.

Could be, Gale agreed. But suppose he feels sure like you do.

He couldn't, Stafford replied. He either doesn't think at all or he's worried.

You think that, Gale expressed surprise. You wouldn't figure he thinks he'll get killed.

It could be, the other said soberly. Some people force themselves when they know they haven't got a chance.

Whew, Gale exhaled sharply, shaking his head. But why, he asked.

A gamble, Stafford explained. They start talking big, impulsive, sort of carried away by their own built-up sense of importance, and finally it's too late to back down.

So they go to their own death, knowing it, just to hold up a principle. Gale's forehead was sweat-banded, and he was breathing hard.

Something like that, John Stafford admitted.

In that case, John, Gale said huskily. You're something like an executioner.

Yes, Stafford said. A name I've never wanted, but true.

No, Gale thought vaguely, dredging up some unformed notion. That's true only if the feeling you have is to win. It wouldn't be true if you felt you were going to lose.

Stafford said nothing, stared out the dusty window into the dismal street.

There's more to this, Gale grumbled, than I ever thought about before.

They both looked at the clock on the wall. It showed fifteen minutes of six.

Another drink, Gale asked.

No, one's enough.

John, Gale tried to make conversation, and he shuffled about behind the bar moving bottles, rinsing glasses already rinsed because he wasn't sure he could keep his hands from shaking, or that he could keep his voice steady because, in spite of Stafford's feeling, as he called it, Gale was scared, worried for the life of his only friend. That damned Durango Kid was fast, greased lightning with a gun and everybody knew it. Gale had heard some of the town's people, just on the basis of sensible odds, betting on the Kid.

John, he blurted finally. Have you ever thought of a man you might be afraid of, one, I mean, that you thought could beat you in a gun-fight?

Stafford shook his head slowly. Yes, he answered quietly. There is one but so far we've never had any reason to tangle.

Gale was dumbfounded, not that Stafford admitted to such a thing, but rather that such a man lived. The hell you say, he gasped. May I ask who the hell this gent is.

John Stafford looked him straight in the eye. I couldn't admit this to anyone else, you know, but I fought along-side the man, more than once, down in the Big Bend country. You used to know him, too, and I know, if we ever faced each other, he would have my number. He'd win.

Gale let his mind run back to those days but couldn't remember any man, dead or still living, who would fit into this picture.

Earl Morse, John Stafford said matter-of-factly.

Morse, Gale exploded. That back-shooting son-of-a-bitch, that low-life bastard. Why John, he's no more than a damned coward and in a stand-up fight wouldn't have a chance against you.

You're right in most of what you say, Gale, Stafford replied soberly. But I saw him in action, twice, and each time he got his man. But that's not what makes me know he'd win. It was in his eyes, the way he looked into mine. He knew it, and I knew it. It's just that we've had no reason to tangle.

Gale felt a sinking sensation in the pit of his stomach. He wondered vaguely if Morse was still living, wished that he was dead. His most fervent wish was that the two would never meet.

Better give me that other drink, John Stafford said, looking at the clock. It's one minute of six and I don't want to keep the Kid waiting. I'll be back in a couple of minutes to drink it. ●

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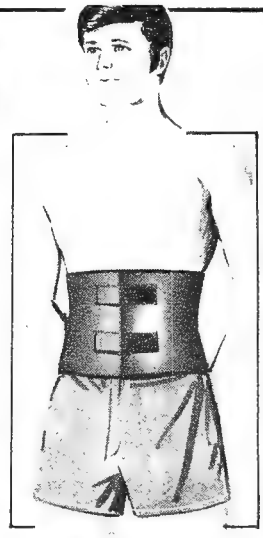

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Al Jennings soon after release from the federal penitentiary.

FEARSOME NIGHTRIDER — OR COWARDLY BRAGGARD? WHAT WAS THE REAL AL JENNINGS? HERE ARE SOME STARTLING ANSWERS FROM A MAN WHO KNOWS.

THE KATY FLYER of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railroad boomed out of a sultry August night in 1896. When it halted at the lonely water station of Berwyn, Indian Territory, sinister figures sneaked through the darkness toward the train.

Immediately the engine cab and cars were boarded by the Al Jennings gang. The site of this train robbery was a few miles south of Ardmore, a trading center in Carter County.

Later the leader, a bantam sized extrovert, Al Jennings, bragged that they got $35,000 after blowing open the Wells Fargo strong box.

AL JENNINGS, COUNTERFEIT OUTLAW

By MAURICE KILDARE

Investigating authorities said they obtained much less than $10,000. Wells Fargo reported the loss as negligible. It seems that the gang actually obtained close to $2,000—at this time, it was the only fair haul the Jennings gang ever made. The bandits consisted of Al and Frank Jennings, Pat and Morris O'Malley, and a pickup would-be outlaw who immediately disappeared.

Before and after the Katy Flyer robbery the Jennings gang never obtained more than just a few dollars. Long ago as a kid in Oklahoma, where my parents sent me to school, Al Jennings and his lying boasts were laughed at. In that hard scrabble country his ridiculous claims after release from the pen provided amusement where there existed hardly anything to laugh about.

I also heard his lectures when he was on a traveling circuit and saw him playing small parts in a few movies. He reported as the gospel truth and wrote of great train and bank robberies in which huge sums of money were taken. These never happened outside of his boasting brain.

He wrote two books describing his dangerous outlaw years and was hired as a technical advisor to moving picture companies in Hollywood. His job was to make sure the old western outlaw techniques of robbing banks and trains were authentic.

As such an expert Al Jennings was a total blank. His outlaw career was a series of lamentable failures from beginning to end largely due to his own stupidity.

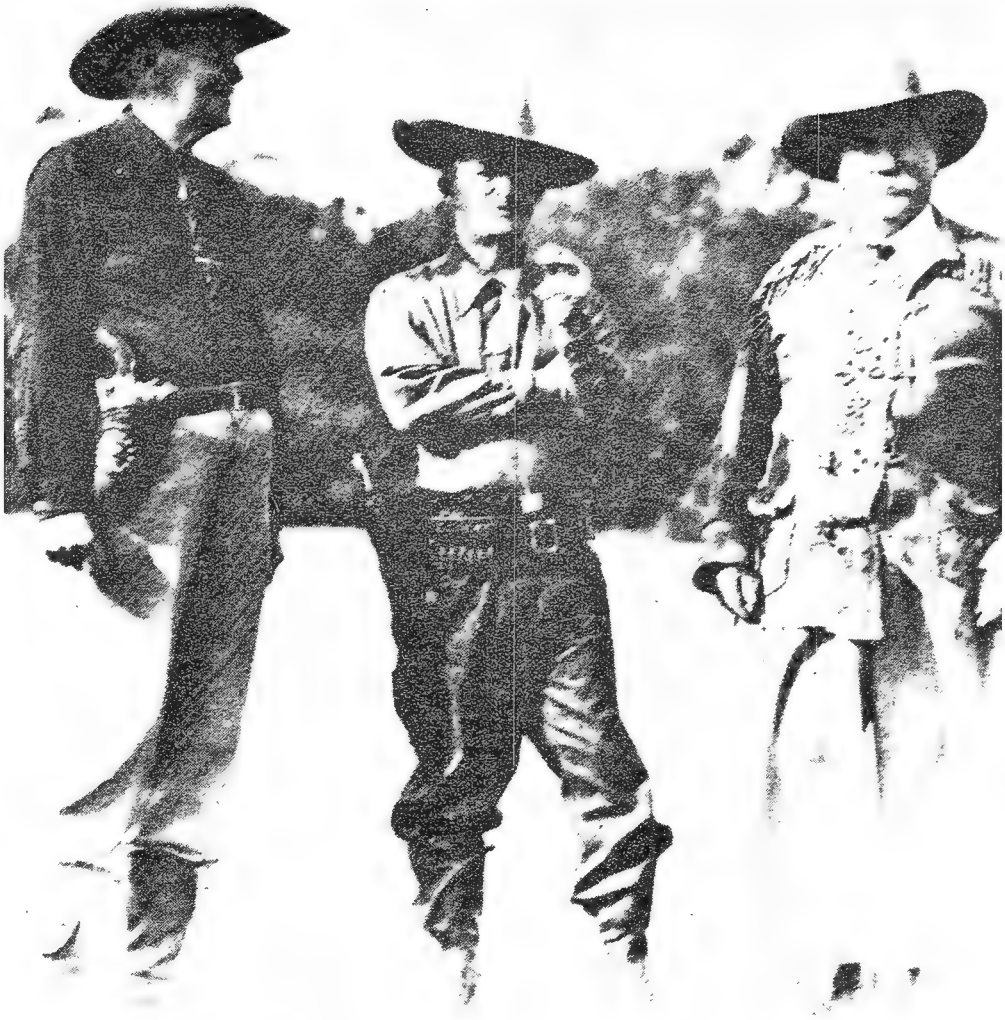
As Bill Tilghman, the most noted peace officer in the heyday of famous outlaw forays in the midwest told me, "Al Jennings was so low on the outlaw scale the real ones wouldn't have let him hold their get-away horses. He couldn't have been trusted with them!"

These are not the exact words Tilghman said to me in Stillwater, Oklahoma, but the nearest they can be stated in printable words. He had nothing but contempt for Al Jennings.

Al Jennings was next to the youngest of four brothers. The others were Edward, John and Frank.

Jennings was born somewhere in Virginia on November 25, 1863. The family, after moving to the Indian Territory that afterwards became Oklahoma, were always crafty about saying exactly where they came from.

One gathers the idea that the Jennings family *had* to migrate from Virginia. This appears incongruous, for the father, J. F. D. Jennings, was a greatly respected man with never a taint on his reputation in Oklahoma. After reaching the Indian Territory he served as a federal judge at Woodward several years and later as superior court judge at Tecumseh.



Al Jennings with officers E. D. Hix, left and Cris Madsen, right in 1937.

His first three sons became lawyers, which in those days was not a difficult achievement. No particular training was required, the main essential being a fast, impressive gift of gab.

Edward and John opened a law office in Woodward. Al Jennings managed to wangle briefly the county attorney's office at El Reno. For awhile Frank served as court clerk in Denver, Colorado.

Al Jennings seems to have resented that he was a scrawny weakling. This caused him to resort to boastfulness, vainglory outbursts and swashbuckling. These characteristics were to embroil him in petty trouble almost continuously. He never became a big time outlaw despite his claims.

Historians describe him as a frustrated nonentity who, in his writings and public statements, swore to having faced down and cowered famous gunfighters of note. About each such incident he mentions there exists no corroborating evidence whatever. They never happened.

While county attorney at El Reno—a job that he had obtained under questionable circumstances—he became friends with the sadistic killer Little Dick West, a former member of the Doolin gang. As an officer of the court Jennings should have immediately turned West in to the U. S. marshals who wanted him for many high crimes.

Jack Love was sheriff of Woodward County. Through the political influence of attorney Temple Houston, son of the famous Sam Houston, Love was appointed to the corporation commission, a lucrative job that the Jennings family had hoped to get. Naturally they were greatly incensed.

Bad blood broke out when Sheriff Love sued Frank Garst for $3,000 which he claimed was owed him as pasturage fees. Temple Houston represented Love in the case and Ed Jennings defended Garst.

During the course of the trial the two hot-headed lawyers came to blows. They were separated by court bailiffs. During the fracas some one yelled at Houston, "I'll shoot you, you son of a bitch!"

In Hollywood years later Al Jennings declared that he made the threat and had his gun half drawn from the holster but that Houston backed down from a shoot-out. However, it was Ed Jennings who made the threat.

When the confusion ended Ed Jennings and Temple Houston apologized to the court for their unseemingly conduct.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

U. S. Deputy Marshal Bud Ledbetter, who bet Tilghman that he could arrest the Jennings gang without firing a shot. He did.

The body of Little Dick West after he was killed by marshals Tilghman and Thomas.

That same evening Ed and John Jennings were playing poker in a saloon. From off the street Houston strode inside, looking for Ed Jennings. He had found out who made the threat in the court room and came with his gun drawn.

Realizing that he was Houston's quarry, Ed Jennings jumped to his feet and away from the green topped table. He never had a chance to draw his gun to defend himself. Houston promptly shot him dead.

John Jennings belatedly leaped upward but never got a gun out either. Houston sent a bullet smashing through his left shoulder. After John fell to the floor bystanders talked Houston out of finishing him off. John Jennings eventually recovered.

Houston immediately surrendered to his friend the sheriff and was released. At a quick trial he pleaded self-defense. Perjured witnesses swore that Ed Jennings drew his gun first. The bald facts are that neither brother much more than touched a sixgun butt before Houston, with the holdout drop, burned them down.

Anger over this gross miscarriage of justice is one thing that can be said in favor of Al Jennings. He would have been less than a man not to have thirsted for revenge.

After attending the quickie trial Al Jennings left the courtroom in a rage. Unwisely he began making threats to kill Houston. Had he done so, bushwhack or face-to-face, no jury would have convicted him. Public sympathy was with the Jennings family. Temple Houston was later forced to move on.

In his memoirs Jennings wrote that he hunted Houston "like a cur dog" for three or four weeks trying to avenge the murder of his brother.

Like all the rest of his later day claims, there wasn't any truth in this statement either. After making his angered threats against Houston's life he became scarce. He wisely hid out until Houston left town. Temple Houston was a fast gunman and dangerous at all times.

From Little Dick West Jennings learned what little he did know about robbing banks and trains. Later he bragged of them as the big time jobs the Jennings gang pulled off.

Had he stayed with Little Dick West's vastly experienced manner of working the Jennings story might have been different. Instead he took over as leader of a gang of misfits and forced them to operate under his orders. It was at this time the O'Malley brothers and the unscrupulous traitor Sam Baker were recruited.

Their first robbery was the holdup of the Santa Fe passenger train near Edmond. On that dark night the train pulled out of the station with the bandits taking over the engine cab at gun point. The engineer was forced to take the train a couple of miles out of town.

After breaking into the express car, the messenger surrendering meekly, the safe was blasted open. It contained less than $200. At this point the gang must have lost their nerve for they did not

Famed Marshal Bill Tilghman with Marshal Tom Jones. (Oklahoma Historical Society)

Denver, where Frank Jennings was a court clerk for a brief period before joining brother Al to start on the outlaw trail. (Denver Public Library)

Temple Houston, son of the famous Sam Houston, and an enemy of the Jennings brothers.

attempt to rob the coach passengers.

While dodging pursuing lawmen two weeks later, the gang piled railroad ties on the tracks of the M. K. & T. railroad south of Muskogee.

On that dark night when the engine headlight disclosed the barrier, the engineer instantly recognized the situation.

He opened the throttle wide and crashed through the block, scattering hardwood ties on both sides of the track.

Despite Little Dick West's advice on the sure way to halt a train was by taking over the engine cab, Jennings insisted on doing it his way. Disgusted and fed up with him, Little Dick West left the gang.

Very quietly Sam Baker also pulled out, but maintained constant friendly relations with the Jennings brothers. He did so in the pay of the U. S. marshal as an informer. Considering Baker a loyal friend, the Jennings gang hung around his farm quite often.

Al Jennings selected another man to replace the other two. The five then planned to rob a train as it pulled into Purcell.

Riding close to town, the gang left their saddled horses in hiding and slipped near the station on the siding. They were not there long when they discovered a large band of riders galloping into town.

The easily panicked Al Jennings cried, "Boys, that's a posse!"

The nervous bunch raced wildly out of what they imagined to be a trap set by lawmen.

While this wasn't true in this case, there was indeed one waiting to close down on them. A posse composed of U. S. deputy marshals was aboard the train. Having been informed of the pending holdup, Bill Tilghman was in the engine cab and Heck Thomas with a large number of armed deputies in the cars.

By the mere breadth of a hair the inept Jennings gang missed a final meeting with Fate that night.

Later on, learning that the train had contained U. S. marshals, the gullible Al Jennings failed to catch on. At no time did he regard the sniveling Sam Baker with suspicion. It never entered his mind that only inside information could have been the reason why marshals were on the Purcell train.

Writhing under humiliation of repeated failures, the five luckless outlaws, intending to set the midwest afire with their robberies, rode to Minco near El Reno. Pat O'Malley was sent into town to reconnoiter.

What the dull-witted O'Malley saw stunned even him. Heavily armed men walked the streets or were stationed at strategic intersections. A posse guarded the bank which Al Jennings proposed heisting. The Jennings gang fled.

O'Malley was right; for it was obvious they had been betrayed but Al Jennings still failed to realize the truth. Tilghman, usually given the bandit shoot-out details, had been handed Sam Baker's inside dope on the planned robbery. He went to Baker's place to finish off the amateur outlaws.

Desperate, hiding in the brush, filthy dirty and knowing not what minute might be their last, the gang broke into a small country store mear Muskogee for provender. They were practically starving, and where was the glamour of being famous outlaws that Al Jennings envisioned and later laid claim to?

Awakened by their noise soon after closing his store at sundown, the proprietor came from the rear living quarters packing a double-barrelled shotgun. He began blasting away. The gang fled so preciptuously that Al Jennings left behind a leather coat he had picked up at an isolated farmhouse a few days before.

The panicky outlaws sped south, hardly reining up until reaching Tupelo—at that time known as Jeffs—the following night. Breaking into another store they were not disturbed, obtaining food and clothing to replace their tattered rags. Less than ten dollars was taken from the cash drawer under the counter top.

Newly outfitted, their belly wrinkles smoothed out by canned food, the gang rode on south to below Ardmore. Berwyn was cased and then the train robbed. This was one time when Sam Baker, left far behind to the north, couldn't tip off U. S. marshals.

This haul stunned the territory. For awhile it appeared that the Jennings gang might make big time in outlaw circles after all. On the get-away Al and his brother Frank contrived to get lost from the others. They fled across Red River into Texas with all the loot.

Enroute to Galveston they sold their horses and saddles. From that port they took passage as deck hands on a fruit boat to Honduras.

At this time the egotistical Al Jennings considered himself a big time bandit. In his exalted opinion he was more notorious and wanted than any of the Daltons or Doolin outlaws. Maybe he had even outshone Jesse James.

This lengthy yarn is what he gave William Syndey Porter, who had taken refuge in Honduras from federal bank embezzlement charges at Austin, Texas. When Porter later returned to Austin and was sentenced to a federal penitentiary he began writing under the pseudonym of O. Henry.

Prices for everything in the banana republic were dirt cheap. Yet within a

short time the Jennings brothers were broke. This is further proof the Berwyn train robbery didn't benefit them much.

Deck-handing back to Galveston, the brothers beat their way slowly north into the territory.

One thing Al Jennings was proficient at was dishing out convincing talk to gullible men. He soon had the O'Malley brothers back in the gang. Then, of all things, Little Dick West agreed to ride with the bunglers again, probably because he was finding it extremely difficult to keep hidden from U. S. marshals.

A robbery was soon planned on the Rock Island railroad near Pocasset. A little before midday on October 1, 1897, five masked men took over a section gang working on the track eleven miles from Chickasa. The foreman was forced to flag down the train while the Jennings gang hid in the brush alongside the right-of-way.

When the train halted the engineer and conductor came off to ascertain the reason for being red flagged. They were taken at gunpoint.

Jennings and Little Dick West ordered the express car opened, which was done. They found two locked iron safes, one on top of the other. The messenger informed them that they were through boxes and could not be opened until arriving at their destination. This was an outright lie but it almost fooled the counterfeit bandits.

Little Dick West, suspecting otherwise, knocked the messenger down with the barrel of his gun. He was then yanked onto his feet.

"Open the safes!" West ordered. "Or I'll blast you right between the eyes!"

Frightened at the prospect of bloodshed, Al Jennings rushed to Little Dick West's side, exhorting him not to shoot. He said they would blow the safes open and didn't need to kill anybody.

Staring at him contemptuously, Little Dick West strode angrily out of the express car.

Four sticks of dynamite had been brought along, although none except Little Dick West knew anything about handling explosives. Jennings placed one stick between the safes, dropping the other three carelessly to the car floor.

Capped, the fuse was lit and the bandits took the messenger with them outside to lie safely on the ground.

What followed astounded them. The single stick blasted the safes apart, but opening no locked doors. The other three then exploded, tearing the express car apart.

The bold Jennings gang took a few watches and less than forty dollars in cash from the terrified coach passengers. They also managed to get a stalk of bananas and a gallon of whiskey.

As they rode off into the night Little Dick West was already on his way elsewhere. Eventually he was killed by U. S. deputy marshals Tilghman and Thomas on April 7, 1898.

The remaining four sneaked through the country, eating a meal on the dodge whenever able to beg one from some farmer. Officers were after them in full cry.

Riding into Cushing on stolen farm plugs, the Jennings gang broke into a general store. They obtained more new clothing, some food and about thirty dollars from the cash drawer.

On their flight from Cushing the scrawny horses gave out. Hobbling them along, walking and leading the plugs, the sorry gang did the best possible under the circumstances.

One night was spent on Sam Baker's farm. Al Jennings made the mistake of revealing that they were going on to the farm of Jim Harkless who had befriended them before. While hiding there, they would rest up.

No sooner were the outlaws out of sight than Baker was racing his horse to get the information to U. S. Deputy Marshal Ledbetter.

The next day Ledbetter led forth a large posse, surrounding the farm home. Mrs. Harkless, the hired girl and the children were allowed to come out. The thin plank walls would stop no bullets.

The gang inside began crawling out, preparing to flee almost immediately. The posse was met with some gunfire at first. They had sieved the house with lead for several minutes before discovering that their quarry had escaped.

Before leaving the house Al Jennings sustained scratch wounds on the left knee. Frank Jennings had his clothing torn by bullets, but suffered no wound. The O'Malley brothers were the first to get away.

In his later grandiose writings and for the Hollywood movies Al Jennings made the brief exchange of gunfire with the marshals appear to be a great and desperate battle.

As a boy I can recall the accounts of men who knew the facts, how Al and Frank Jennings ran like rats from a sinking ship.

Tilghman reported that all of the gang except Al Jennings were armed with .40-72 caliber Winchester rifles. Al Jennings had a .38-55 caliber Marlin.

When the marshals broke inside the house they found only one empty cartridge casing where Al Jennings made his supposed famous stand against lawmen. On the floor were half a dozen unfired .38-55 cartridges.

Still too foolish not to suspect Sam Baker as being a stool pigeon the Jennings and O'Malley brothers returned to his farm, hoofing it all the way.

Baker not only informed on the gang but helped set them up for destruction.

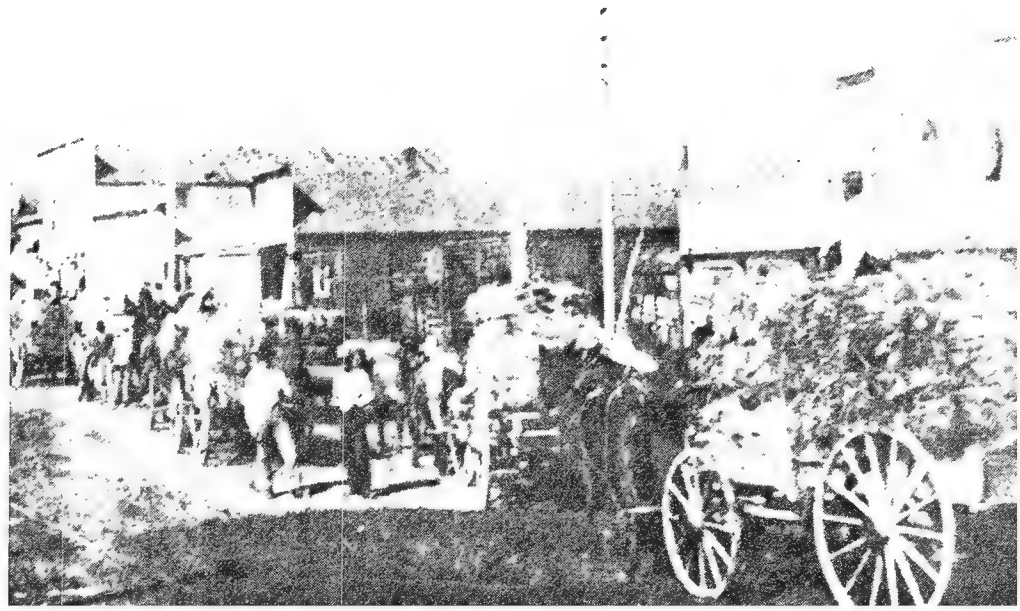
One morning Baker started them on their way to escape, or so they thought. Al and Frank Jennings rode the spring seat of a light wagon. Behind them under the sheeted bows was Pat O'Malley.

The only horse remaining in the gang's possession was ridden by Morris O'Malley. He rode with Baker along the road as the wagon approached a creek crossing. Baker stopped briefly, telling the Jennings brothers that they were then on their way to safety.

He turned back, leaving them. For some reason Morris O'Malley went along with Baker but was captured later.

Feeling sorry for themselves Al and Frank Jennings started on. But they didn't get far before being startled by U. S. Deputy Marshal Ledbetter. He

(continued on page 39)



By JEFFREY M. WALLMANN

No man's your friend, each hour may be your last, when you ride into town tarnished with the killer brand...

GUNSMOKE REPUTATION

IT HAD BEEN raining for two days straight and would for another two, but it was raining the hardest when Ward Satler returned to Phileaux. It was as though he was the eye of the storm, the water cascading in torrents around him, his oilskin slicker whipping in the wind, the thunder grumbling in the distant hills in anger.

Satler didn't appear to take notice, letting the rain pelt his wide, bowed shoulders and pour from the brim of his Stetson. His gnarled hands rested on the pommel of his Casper Heavy Stock saddle, the tough line-back dun under him as calm as its rider as it shuffed its feet down the single, narrow mud-caked street of the town.

Satler didn't look right or left, and most of the time kept his head and eyes down, seemingly uncaring where he was.

Sheriff Ben Monroe cared. He had been sitting at his chewed-up roll-top desk in the jail when Satler had ridden past his window. After a moment of surprise he jerked to his feet, grabbed his yellow slicker and hurried out the door. The wind-whipped storm slashed at his bare head, drenching face and hair as he ran down the boardwalk after the rider.

"Ward!" he yelled, but his call was swallowed by the storm.

Satler didn't rein in until he reached the *Silver Slipper*, the rowdiest of the town's two saloons, which was at the far edge of Phileaux. He dismounted and threw a loop over the rail, then stepped inside, disappearing from Monroe's view.

Monroe cursed. He liked a peaceful town, and the lines etched in his face told of the harsh years he'd spent making it that way. He'd faced a few guns and chased a few others beyond the town limits, including Ward Satler.

Satler had always been a sore wound for him, for the sheriff had grown up with him, their fathers having been neighbors. Both fathers were dead, and the two boys had long since grown and gone their separate ways, one toward the star, the other toward a gunsmoke reputation.

Ben Monroe had sadly watched his once best-friend bend in the wrong direction, culminating in the sight of Satler standing over the dead Midge Ilverman with his face twisted in some kind of unholy satisfaction.

Ilverman had been well liked. It had been with mixed bitterness and sorrow that Monroe had ordered Satler out of Phileaux, the plea of self-defense not withstanding.

A decade had passed since that day, ten years in which Monroe had heard tell now and then of his friend's lightning, cold accuracy. Now the gunman had returned, and it could only mean trouble and the smell of gunsmoke. Phileaux wanted no part of Satler. In a career of death he'd stepped on too many toes of the living.

The sheriff shouldered his way through the black bat-wing doors of the saloon. On his right was a short corridor with pegs for coats. He saw Satler's coat dripping on one of the hooks, making a puddle on the worn floor. Grimly, Monroe hitched up his belt and walked into the bar proper, and saw his old friend standing at the long, polished counter, a whiskey in front of him.

The gunman's back was turned, but in the reflection of the back-bar mirror, his eyes were steady and intent on Monroe as he approached.

"Howdy, Ben," Satler said when Monroe came up beside him. He kept his back to the sheriff. "It's been a long time."

"It should have been a damn sight longer. What are you doing back?"

"Coming home." Satler swallowed his whisky, and thumped his glass on the bar for another. "Yeah, I'm coming home," he repeated, and then coughed softly. "Long ride didn't do me much good. Think I'm coming down with a cold."

"Ward, you're going to have to go back out in that rain. I don't want you in Phileaux. I made that clear to you ten years ago."

Satler turned, and the sheriff saw the weariness in his features. The gunman was as brown as any Indian, tall and thick, had been close to two hundred and thirty pounds when Monroe had last seen him and now didn't look as if he'd gained or lost any of his muscle. But his once waxed black hair was faded and streaked with grey, and the dark, brooding fire that had been in his deep-set eyes seemed dim.

Monroe rubbed a hand through his own salt-and-pepper hair, reminded as he looked at Satler that he, too, was getting old and tired.

"Ben, that's just it. Ten years have gone, and times are different. A man has a right to come back if he wants to, if he keeps to himself. I'm not aiming for trouble."

"No trouble?" Monroe snapped back heatedly. "Look down at yourself, Ward. You're still carrying that old Walch Navy—" he pointed to the .36 calibre twelve-shot revolver in Satler's worn holster—"and you're still carrying your name. You've got a gunsmoke rep, Ward. Get out of town."

Silence settled like the thick smoke and liquor-heavy air of the saloon. Some of the permanent locals had recognised Satler when he'd entered, and had taken sudden pretended interest in their shot glasses. But with the intervention of their sheriff and his demand for the gunman to leave, everybody stopped what they were doing and stared in chilled apprehension.

"Bartender!" Satler pounded the counter, ignoring Monroe's ultimatum. "Bartender, get my friend here a drink." Fat John, the counterman, scurried to obey; Satler coughed again in the fist of one hand as the glass was hurriedly placed by Monroe. "Drink up, Ben. That's what it's there for."

"I don't want it. I'm giving you five minutes, and that's all."

Satler raised his glass to his lips. Just before swallowing, he asked calmly. "What's the matter, Ben. Afraid for the kid?"

In the dead stillness that followed,

Monroe could hear his own blood pounding in his temples. "You know . . . about Jimmy Ilverman?"

Satler sighed, nodded, and turned to hook his elbows behind him on the counter. "You know, this is almost the same spot I downed old Midge Ilverman. Remember that, Ben?" His voice had an odd, faraway quality to it. "Of course you do. Silly of me to ask."

"Damnit, and I don't want another Ilverman to die here. You couldn't have picked a worst time or place, Ward. Midge's son will be coming in soon's the stage pulls in from Brazos Creek. It's overdue now, probably because of the weather, but he stops in with the driver for a drink regular every night, and if he should see you—"

"I've been hearing his cussing all the way down to Laramie. You're not telling me anything new." Satler smiled thinly. "Says he's going gun me for killing his pa, and then maybe a few others like me."

"He rides guard for an excuse to practice, Ward, that's how serious he is. But he's no more of a gunman than Midge was; slower than a boot in gumbo. Is that why you came back, Ward? To kill a rash young boy?"

The gunman looked deeply, earnestly into Monroe's angry face. "I told you, I'm coming home. I won't start anything, but I won't back down, and if he's determined, there's no way I can stop him. Besides, sooner or later Jimmy Ilverman would come gunning for me. Them kind always do. I'm getting mighty old to keep looking over my shoulder." He coughed, adding: "Damned rain."

Monroe knew with bitterness that he'd failed to get through to the gunman, and then he heard the rumble of the Brazos Creek stage outside as it braked beside the depot two doors down. In a few minutes the boy would be stepping through the doors, and five minutes later he'd be carried out on one. Monroe's hand fell to the butt of his pistol.

"Don't Ben," Satler warned in a flinty voice. "You can't stop what has to be, either. You can't lock me up or wound me. That would only delay matters, not prevent them."

Monroe stood, undecided, an ache of frustration throbbing in his gut. He heard the raucous laugh of Dirsten, the stage driver, and the higher-pitched voice of Jimmy Ilverman, and their boots hitting the planks outside. He eyed the bat-wings, praying that the kid wouldn't come in this one time—and then the doors parted and Ilverman came in.

Ilverman was short but lithe, with a jutting, stubborn chin and wide, pale blue eyes. He didn't notice Satler at first, busily hanging his coat on the pegs, but Monroe knew what the outcome would be when he did. Jimmy was brash and foolish, all too willing to show the world how tough he was. Yet one glance at the young man's still stiff holster with its big Colt pinched in it, and by the time the youth unshucked the pistol, the sheriff was sure that he'd be in no condition to grow up and learn better.

Ilverman turned, stopped square in his tracks, his eyes narrowing on the easy frame of the gunman as Satler lounged against the railing. Monroe saw the kid take a deep, trembling breath and dully as he heard him ask: "You Ward Satler?"

Satler turned, nodded. "Yes."

"I'm Jim Ilverman, You gunned my pa, and now I'm going to kill you."

"It was self-defense, son," Satler said easily, drawing himself up but still relaxed. "I'm not aiming to fight."

"I am. I've been waiting years for this."

"Stop it," Monroe cut in. "Both of you. And you, Jimmy, get out of here. I don't want to see you dead."

"Stay out of this, Sheriff," Ilverman replied sharply. "It's going to be here and now, or later when you're not around. I want it now."

"I told you, Ben," Satler said softly. "Step away so you don't get hurt. No telling where his aim is at."

Monroe had no choice. Sadly he moved back a few paces, feeling sick, wondering if he was getting too old for the job, losing his touch.

Jimmy Ilverman's hand went for his leather in a clumsy, artless draw. Satler worked with experienced precision, drawing and pulling the trigger in one, smooth motion, aiming his Walch as if pointing his finger at the youth's chest. Everybody in the saloon, including Monroe, heard his gun as he squeezed off two shots. *Click . . .Click . . .*

Ilverman's Colt blasted the stillness then, one of his bullets ripping into the gunman's ribs, another shot hitting the bar beside him, and a third plowing viciously into Satler's beltline.

Satler sagged, pulled the trigger again reflexively—*click*—and fell against the counter, sliding down its front to settle heavily on the floor.

"Damn, I don't believe it!" Monroe hunkered beside Satler. "Easy, Ward. I'll get you a doctor."

"N—no," the gunman managed. His shirtfront was sticky with blood, and he coughed, his breathing harsh. "A doc in Laramie . . . gave me three months. Something wrong with me inside . . . Ain't the rain making me hack like this . . . It ain't the rain."

"But why,. . .?" Monroe shook his head, then picked up the Walch from Satler's limp fingers. When he'd heard it mis-fire, he thought that the pistol had jammed somehow or there'd been faulty cartridges, but as he examined it, he saw that there weren't any bullets in it at all. Satler had gone up against the kid with an empty gun.

"I think I understand why you came back, Ward," he said softly. "I think I do, now."

The gunman grimaced from the pain, then grinned ruefully. "Couldn't see witherin' in some bed with my boots off, Ben. Heard about Jimmy Ilverman, figured he'd get himself killed unless somebody showed him he was—that he was . . ." He sunk lower, rolling his head down toward the floor, and Monroe could hardly hear his last words.

"Make him hang up his gun, Ben," he whispered, then: "I came home, didn't I? I came—"

Jimmy Ilverman loomed over the two of them. "Dead? Is he dead?"

"Yeah, Jimmy, he's dead." Monroe rose and looked at the young man's pale features. "You shot Ward Satler, and you've got a rep now. What you planning to do with it?"

"Nothing," Ilverman said sickly. "You saw it. You heard his gun hit twice before I even got mine clear. He had me cold, and only a miracle saved me." He turned away, shuddering. "I was so scared I couldn't even hit straight, or stop when he couldn't fight back. I don't want to end up like him."

"I'm sure he'd have been glad to hear you say that, boy." Monroe draped a comforting arm around Ilverman's shoulder. "Let's have a drink on that, Jimmy, not on killing Ward. In fact, let's make it three—one for Ward himself."

"For Satler?" Jimmy Ilverman blinked.

Ben Monroe looked down at his dead friend. "Yeah. He came home. The right way." ●

The Keg of Gold

(continued from page 26)

went near the body. It had been scalped completely. What skin was left had turned black. The Navajo-Piute could have also been mistaken. Maybe Wild Cat got away with at least that one filled keg of gold after all."

Well, maybe. Hubbell was always a hopeful man, charitable by helping many people during his life time. He was also a most wishful dreamer, sure that one day soon he would discover untold wealth in gold or silver in the Navajo country and his financial troubles would be over.

No one else, not even the Navajos, believed that Wild Cat got away alive with anything. He was killed by renegade Utes from the extreme southwestern corner of Colorado, intent on stealing a few Navajo ponies. They came onto Wild Cat in camp alone, rubbed him out for all the stock there, camp equipment and food, and raced back across the San Juan for their Colorado reservation. It wasn't the least likely that they knew anything about the gold.

White never returned to that part of the Navajo reservation. He went to California and bought an orange grove in San Bernardino County. Later, almost every summer he returned to Arizona looking up former friends, until his death in 1936.

One keg filled with gold, and most likely a second, are buried up there near that short wash. Undoubtedly wherever they might be cached they could possibly someday be found by metal detectors employed by modern treasure hunters.

From the way White and both Hubbells described the area to me, when I interrogated them, the site was barely across the Arizona-Utah border. It is directly north and slightly east of Mexican Water trading post that stands on the north side of Walker Creek east of the junction of that stream with Chinle Creek.

It is also south of the cliff dwellings on Chinle Creek that empties into the San Juan about fifteen miles north of the Arizona border.

(Note: this area is on the Navajo Indian Reservation. The prospector or treasure hunter in Navajo country must have a permit from the tribe. At the present time tribal officials are most chary about issuing them due to vandalism and abuse of privileges granted visitors to their domain). ●

Al Jennings, Counterfeit Outlaw

(continued from page 36)

stepped out of the timber directly into the road facing them over a levelled sixgun.

He called, "Surrender in the name of the law!"

Hardly had the last word left his tongue before the Jennings brothers' hands were holding up the sky. Behind them appeated Pat O'Malley who also raised his paws.

Not until after they surrendered and were disarmed did the three culprits learn that Ledbetter actually had a posse hiding in the timber on each side of the road. He had made a bet with Tilghman that the Jennings brothers were so gutless he could capture them single-handed without firing a shot.

Jennings was sentenced to life imprisonment while the others got five years each in the federal penitentiary at Columbus, Ohio. When the sentences of the other three expired Jennings was pardoned.

In prison he ran across Porter again, who was then trying to write as O. Henry. In his memoirs of outlaw days Al Jennings stated that he felt sorry for him because Jennings considered himself as the better writer and that Porter lacked talent.

Of course Porter went on to become world famous, his works regarded as classics today. Jennings penned two books, badly conceived and no one remembers them now.

After release from prison Al Jennings turned to evangelistic work, billing himself with gaudy lithograph posters "*Beating Back With Al Jennings.*" With every stand he made, usually in some run-down theater, he displayed "outlaw" relics. Among them was a pair of sixguns with which he allegedly cowed and backed down the more famous outlaws of his time.

For awhile Jennings appeared on the Pantages vaudeville circuit dressed in a western outfit complete with mule eared-boots and sixguns.

One historian described him as an ultra-extrovert and his own loud mouthed personal press agent. In Hollywood he played a few bit parts in the movies.

Eventually Jennings inveigled a company into filming the supposed true story of his life. The script writers and director stayed pretty close to the actual facts but Al Jennings declared they had done him wrong. He sued the company but as in his outlaw days got nothing worthwhile.

Al Jennings died in 1960 aged ninety-seven, still bragging with his last breath what a famous outlaw he had been. ●

When Blackjack Lost his head

(continued from page 18)

bloodstained hat feebily from some tall weeds.

The train was halted and the railroaders got the very weak outlaw aboard. His two horses had strayed away and eventually were recovered near Texline.

At the San Rafael hospital in Trinidad Blackjack Ketchum gave his name as George Stevens. Told that his arm must be amputated to save his life he refused to undergo the operation. But when blood poison started setting in he agreed.

Declining an anesthetic, the tough outlaw watched the doctor operating. Partly recovered, he was taken to the Santa Fe jail, still as George Stevens.

Not even Billy Reno could positively identify the outlaw he had hunted so relentlessly. Curiously, no one else in New Mexico could either, or else refused to.

It was necessary to bring in Sheriff G. W. Shields and Blackjack's brother-in-law, Bige Duncan, from Texas to name him.

Tried that fall for attempted train robbery with firearms, the crime then carrying the death penalty, he was convicted and sentenced to be hanged October 5, 1900.

An appeal stayed his execution until set again, for March 22, 1901. Then a second stay advanced the date to April 26th.

On the 24th a special train and ten armed guards took Blackjack to Clayton, where Union County Sheriff Salome Garcia had already built the scaffold.

At 1:30 p. m. on the fatal day Sheriff Garcia brought Blackjack out. Mounting the steps onto the scaffold insouciently he talked and joked with the deputy fitting the noose about his neck while others bound him and pulled on the black cap.

Because he thought they were too slow Blackjack said, "Hurry it up. I'm going to be late in hell for supper!"

Two minutes later the trap was sprung, Blackjack's body, then weighing only one hundred ninety-three pounds, plunged through and kept right on going.

While even hardened lawmen stared in horror, the headless body fell to the ground. His head teetered briefly in the noose before dropping down beside the body.

Arizona Sheriff Fly's prediction that Blackjack Ketchum would lose his head had come true in a very gruesome way.

It was a place ruled by deadly fear, and lawmen stayed away. But to Laramie Nelson, Pinkerton man, the word had come! "Go in there and break up that robbers' hell. Or none of us will get out alive!".

A GREAT NOVEL OF
GUNSWEPT TRAILS
Headlining the Famed
LARAMIE NELSON
Created by
ZANE GREY

HAD THERE not been an observer, the wagon train's fate might have remained a mystery for all time. The fact that there was a stray packsaddle miner wandering the ridges above the Nevada desert was unfortunate for the ambushers, but it provided the nation with exciting news—news that could only be partly suppressed.

A Federal Government wagon train had been overwhelmed, a dozen men killed, several horses and mules destroyed along with ten wagons, and five wagons had disappeared. At the time the telegraph message went out, the missing wagons had not been found.

"They run off to the south," the miner reported. "They was mebbe thirty of 'em, riding like billy-be-damned when they hit that wagon train. First thing you know they was shootin' and yellin'. Reminded me of a Redskin raid. And then all of a sudden it was all over."

"You mean the defenders didn't even put up a fight?" he was asked.

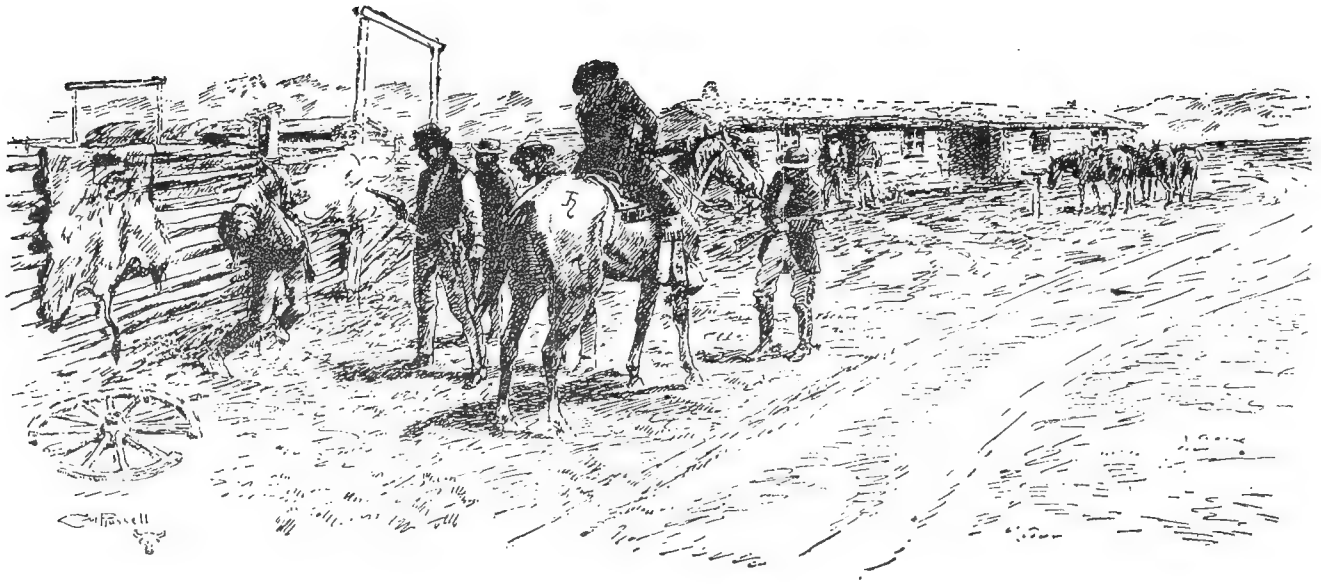
"They didn't have no time," the miner said. "They was hit jest right, in between two hills. Them bushwhackers came at 'em from front and back and it war all over in a minute or two."

"Then what happened?"

"Why, they jest run the rest of them fellers off, shootin' in the air. Then they loaded everything in five wagons. They

Gun Mission for the President

By ROMER ZANE GREY



sure took a hour at it, and headed south with them."

The newspaper reports of the ambush were vague, even with the miner's tale. A government spokesman quickly held a press conference, explaining that the outlaws had raided the train for weapons and had escaped with a dozen cases of arms and ammunition, which was what the miner witnessed being transferred from the destroyed wagons to the five driven away.

The five missing wagons were found two days later, a dozen miles from the scene of the ambush. They had been burned down to the rims. According to official reports, experienced trackers were presently at work, attempting to bring the outlaws to justice.

That was the story as Laramie Nelson read it in the Washington *Tribune*, while waiting for Brock Peters in the lobby of the Bakeland Hotel in Washington City.

Laramie was uncomfortable in a gray suit, a tie and laced shoes. He had spent euqally uncomfortable days on the train from Denver to Chicago, then to Baltimore and Washington City at Brock Peters' urgent request. Something was up certainly, but he knew it was useless to conjecture until he had the full story from Brock Peters, his Pinkerton superior. He knew it had to be big for Peters to send him kiting all the way across the country.

Laramie sighed, leaned back and rolled a cigarette. He was tall, slender, with a lean face that rarely smiled. His gray eyes, slightly squinted from years spent under the scalding plains sun, made him seem even more out of place.

He had just finished the cigarette when Brock Peters came bustling into the hotel lobby.

Peters didn't look at all out of place. But then he always wore Eastern clothes, even in Denver and other points west. Strangely enough, he didn't look out of place there, either. He was a small man, with a round face. The innocent look he habitually wore was deceptive. He could handle himself well in any environment, as he had proved repeatedly to Laramie.

Although Laramie hadn't seen the man in months, Peters didn't waste time on the amenities. He hustled Laramie Nelson into the hotel dining room, ordered dinner, then asked Laramie if he'd heard about the wagon train.

Laramie admitted that he had.

"You know that country, do you?"

Laramie shrugged. "I've ridden over it, but it's not my home range."

Peters grinned impishly. "I've already told the President you know it well."

"The President! You're joshing me!"

Peters leaned close. His gaze darted about the huge dining room before he spoke. "You're to say nothing, mind. This is secret as a thing can get. But I want you to be thinking about that country because that's where you're heading, come tomorrow."

"I leave here tomorrow?"

"Right after you see the President."

Laramie drew a deep breath. Peters had a way of hitting him in the bread basket with both feet. In fact, he seemed to take great delight in it, as Laramie had learned in the past.

Laramie spent a restless night. The very thought of an audience with President Ulysses S. Grant made him extremely nervous.

The next morning they cooled their heels for two hours in the waiting room before being called in for their appointment. They read a dozen newspapers, smoked too much, talked, paced and stared at the clerks and solemn-faced officials who seemed to come and go like the tides back and forth in the hallways.

"You're sure we're supposed to be here?" Laramie asked several times, and each time Peters only growled. But eventually they were escorted into the President's office.

President Grant was shorter than Laramie had thought he would be, a tough-looking, grizzled man with an indoor pallor, a cigar fuming in his beard. Laramie Nelson shook hands, trying not to stare. In civilian clothes President Grant didn't look at all like the mighty warrior who had defeated the battle-wise hosts of Robert E. Lee.

There were three other men present. Two were taller than the President. The third was a bespectacled clerk, who found a chair, produced a notebook and prepared to write.

President Grant said, "This is Mr. George Boutwell, Secretary of the Treasury, and this is my personal aide, Mr. Edward Gans."

"A pleasure," Peters said, shaking hands.

Laramie Nelson merely nodded, shaking hands quickly. The President sat down and fiddled with his cigar.

Gans took the stage. He was slim, wiry, not at all soft-appearing. He had a quick, decisive manner of speaking.

"This is a call for help, gentlemen."

LARAMIE NELSON

"What about soldiers?" Brock Peters asked.

Gans said, "We've sent soldiers. But we have reason to believe there's more to it than just robbery. That's why we're turning to a private agency like the Pinkertons. You people have done good work for us in the past."

President Grant cleared his throat, spoke through cigar smoke. "There are political undertones, Mr. Peters. We've got to find out who and what's behind it. Troops can guard the gold shipments, but when the soldiers leave the problem will remain."

"The answer isn't guards," Gans said slowly. "It's knowledge, intelligence, finding out who's behind it." He smiled thinly. "That brings us to you, Mr. Nelson."

Laramie was thinking hard. He felt there was more here than he was being told, something they could only hint at without bringing it out into the open. They were all staring at him, even the President, and Laramie knew they were expecting some response. He could think of none and merely nodded.

He shot a measuring glance at Laramie Nelson. "As you no doubt know, the country is in poor financial condition—the war and all."

Gans batted the air with his hand. "But I don't have to tell you about that. The country will prosper, of course, and grow. That's a matter of time. Our needs, however, are more immediate. We need gold now." He locked his hands together behind his back and frowned. "We're scrambling to get back on our feet."

Boutwell said, "The reconstruction of the South is still a drain on the treasury."

Gans swung around. "Yes, yes, that's true, among other things." He stared at Laramie again. "We badly need the gold coming out of Nevada."

So the wagon train was carrying gold, not guns, Laramie thought. He stirred, for a moment afraid he had spoken aloud.

But Gans was going on, "There have been two shipments stolen, an enormous loss to the country. We fear others. It has to stop."

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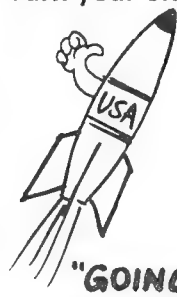

"GOING MY WAY?"

"FOLLOW THOSE SKIS"

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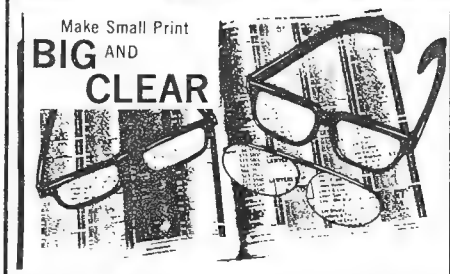

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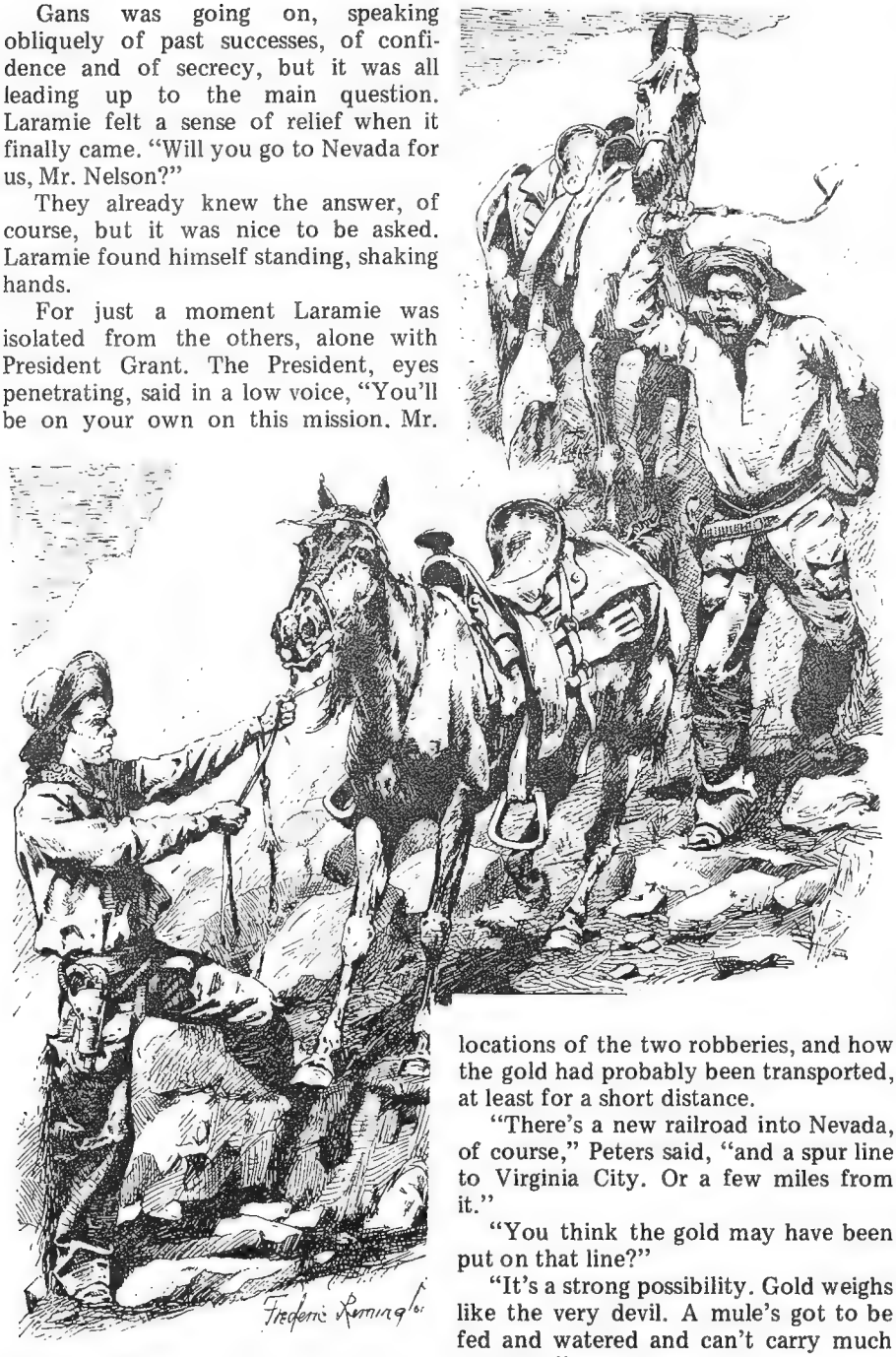
Gans was going on, speaking obliquely of past successes, of confidence and of secrecy, but it was all leading up to the main question. Laramie felt a sense of relief when it finally came. "Will you go to Nevada for us, Mr. Nelson?"

They already knew the answer, of course, but it was nice to be asked. Laramie found himself standing, shaking hands.

For just a moment Laramie was isolated from the others, alone with President Grant. The President, eyes penetrating, said in a low voice, "You'll be on your own on this mission. Mr. Nelson. The need for secrecy is paramount. But it's important to me, to the country."



Then Laramie, feeling slightly dazed, was being ushered out. It struck him that it had been business-like and efficient. He wondered briefly where the newspapers got their ideas about "bumbling" in the White House.

Outside, Peters interrupted his thoughts. "How soon can you catch the train?"

Laramie sighed. It was back to work, out of fancy clothes.

"I'll pack my bag," he said.

LARAMIE NELSON didn't leave quite that soon. With the problem on the table between them, he and Brock Peters had a meeting in the Washington Pinkerton office. With maps and scratch pads, they went over the situation. Peters had marked on the map the locations of the two robberies, and how the gold had probably been transported, at least for a short distance.

"There's a new railroad into Nevada, of course," Peters said, "and a spur line to Virginia City. Or a few miles from it."

"You think the gold may have been put on that line?"

"It's a strong possibility. Gold weighs like the very devil. A mule's got to be fed and watered and can't carry much very fast."

Peters then filled him in on the political situation in Nevada. "A governor's election is coming up and the Federal Government is not favorable to Fred Royal's election. But Royal seems to be the strongest candidate."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"I'm just telling you about Nevada. We don't know if there's any connection. However, the President did mention politics and Nevada has politics and politicians. Nevada also has outlaw gangs. A lot of young hellions from the war have settled there. There's armed robbery, confidence games and crooked gambling. Everything goes."

Laramie nodded, suppressing his impatience. Peters would get to the point sooner or later.

"I think you ought to go in as a gunfighter on the run. We can arrange a few posters and wanted notices."

"Don't make the rewards too high. Some eager gunfighter might want to collect. I'll be busy enough without watching my back."

"All right. We'll leave it vague. But you'll go in as a wanted man. You'll contact the biggest, most powerful outlaw gang in the area and keep your ears open. We'll arrange some method of communication, maybe a cipher, but you'll be on your own mostly. I'll have a man in Virginia City by the time you get there."

The next morning Laramie Nelson was on the train to Chicago, still in city clothes. He had a packet from Peters. There was a simple substitution cipher for any written messages, the note with it saying, "Memorize and destroy."

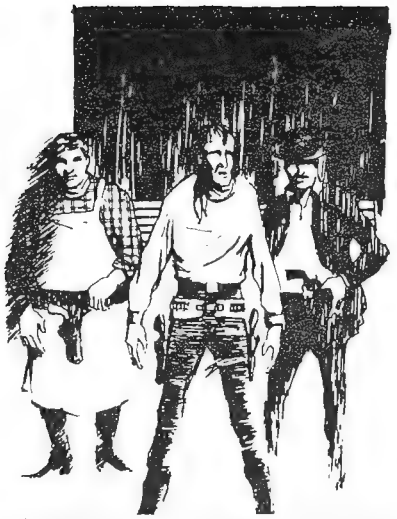
There was a signal for recognizing the Pinkerton operative in Virginia City, two fingers to the hatbrim, casually, or the phrase, "I have a letter for . . ." There was also in the packet a small stack of money totaling two hundred dollars and a typically terse note, "Account for it."

Laramie tried to sleep. He changed trains in Chicago for Omaha. His clothes were looking shabby. There was no time in Omaha for a bath. The cars were drafty and cold. There was a great deal of snow still on the Rockies.

When he arrived in Virginia City late in the afternoon, Laramie was sorely in need of a bath, and he had several days growth of beard. All this made him grumpy. But at least he was beginning to look the part of a man on the run.

A cold wind blew along the bustling streets of the town. Laramie had no heavy coat, and the icy fingers stabbed inside his jacket. The dust of the street hung high above the store buildings, dimming the slanting rays of the sun.

He got his luggage together, a carpet bag and a cheap suitcase, and hired a light rig to take him to the Turner House.



Virginia City had grown since his last visit; it was booming. New, raw-timbered structures stood next to others unpainted and shabby with weather. Dust devils whirled in the streets, spooking horses occasionally, men shouting at them profanely. Several men, faces pinched and raw with cold, stared at him from beside a horse trough.

The main street thronged with miners, cowboys, gamblers, mule skinners. There were few women to be seen. From up the street two quick shots sounded. Not so much as a head was turned.

Laramie gave the wagon driver a fifty-cent piece and went into the Turner House with his bags. He had arrived, he felt tired, slightly quarrelsome, and for just a moment wished he was somewhere else. He had a sour feeling about this assignment.

But as long as he was here, he had to start playing his new role.

He had thought it over and settled on the character he would play. He would be mean, aggressive, the kind of man gold thieves might be interested in. He would be a wanted man, handy with firearms and a knife, willing to sell his skills to the highest bidder.

The desk clerk ignored him when he leaned on the desk. Glancing around the lobby, Laramie saw that he had a good audience, including several women. The women were dressed in fashionable clothes. They were either wives of important men or barroom tarts.

He said quietly, "I'd like to register, please."

The middle-aged clerk continued to ignore him.

Without a word Laramie reached over the counter, gathered a handful of shirt, yanked the clerk across the desk and dumped him onto the floor. The clerk yowled, feet thumping the desk, and he swore mightily when he hit the thin carpet. There was instant silence in the lobby.

Laramie said, in a quiet but menacing voice, "I said I wanted to register."

He leaned on the desk again and watched as the clerk scrambled to his feet and scurried around the desk. He turned the register with shaking hands. The room remained silent, and the scratching of the pen was loud as Laramie signed: *John Moduc.*

The clerk gave him a key. Laramie picked up his bags and stalked away without a word. As he started up the stairs, the chatter began again behind him. He had, he thought, made a very good beginning. It was all he could do to keep from smiling.

In the morning, refreshed by a bath and eight hours sleep, Laramie stared out over the roof tops of Virginia City as he dressed slowly. The first order of business was clothes. He couldn't go about in dude clothes and expect to get anywhere. Besides, it was uncomfortable wearing a gun in a shoulder holster when he was used to it on his hip. Also, he didn't look particularly menacing the way he was.

It took two hours to buy blue jeans, shirts and a fine leather vest with pearl buttons. Recalling Peters' note, Laramie carefully collected bills of sale. He found a heavy coat that suited him, buckled on his own gun, slid a knife into his boot and walked out onto the main street. It was a cool day, crisp and dry, the wind gone this morning.

The Grand Circle Saloon was the largest in town. It was a cavernous place and chilly, despite the four large iron stoves he could see. There were two long bars, one to his left and one at the rear, and tables for talk and cards, and any number of gaming devices. There was a stage to his right, with a brown curtain behind dark footlights. Even this

early, a half dozen fancy-dressed girls and perhaps a dozen customers were in the place.

The next problem was making contact with the men who were stealing government gold. Laramie had no idea who they were or where they might be found. It wasn't going to be easy.

He crossed to the bar on his left, leaning on it, his glance raking the room. He ordered whiskey and sipped it. He had to draw attention to himself and hope the men he was after would want to hire his gun. The best way to do that would be to tackle the local bully. Every town had at least one.

A girl sidled up to him. Her narrow face was heavily rouged, her perfume strong. She looked to be in her thirties. Laramie, knowing how this life aged a woman, shaved ten years off that.

Wise black eyes appraised him.

"Hello, I'm Clara. You're new in town, ain't you?"

"Yeah, I am. Johnny Moduc. Can I buy you a drink?"

Clara nodded and crooked a finger at the barkeep.

Laramie said, "It's quiet."

"It's not yet noon. Wait until tonight. Are you a gambling man, Mr. Moduc?"

"Call me Johnny. Yeah, I gamble a little. I do a little of everything. I'm looking for some of that kind of work to do right now."

"A little of everything?" She smiled tentatively. "Are you good with that gun you're toting?"

"As good as most. Who's the best in town?"

"Well, that depends, I guess. Some say Candy Kesson."

"Interesting name. He has a sweet disposition, I suppose?"

Clara tittered. "He eats candy all the time. Some call him the Candy Kid. He's usually in here evenings, anyone can point him out."

Laramie nodded. The place was about like any other frontier saloon and

dance hall. Three or four hardcases stood by the door looking over the room, half drunkenly. In the far corner an incipient fight had started which was soon broken up. It was too early in the day, Laramie decided, for serious brawls; a lot more rotgut would have to flow before that happened.

One of the dance hall girls was half indignantly, half coquettishly pulling up the shoulder strap which one of the riders had disarranged.

Laramie Nelson spotted a man he thought to be the bouncer, a hulking man with a broken nose, cauliflower ears, a gun on his hip. He was leaning on the far end of the bar reading a newspaper.

Laramie jerked his head. "Who's the bouncer?"

"Joe Lidski. Don't tangle with him, Johnny."

Laramie smiled tightly. "Mean?"

"Real mean. Nobody gives him trouble. Not even Candy."

"I think I'll try my luck," Laramie said, motioning toward the faro layout.

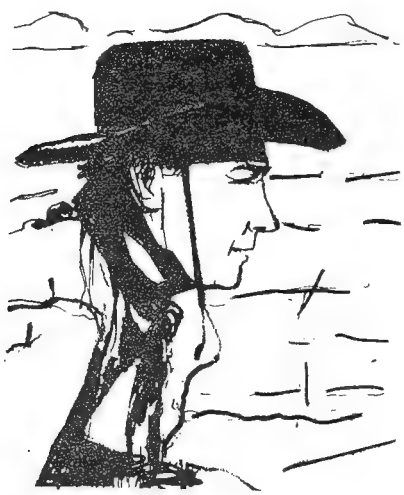
Clara had been a help, but he didn't wish to get involved with her. She pouted as he moved away from her, then looked around the room for another prospect.

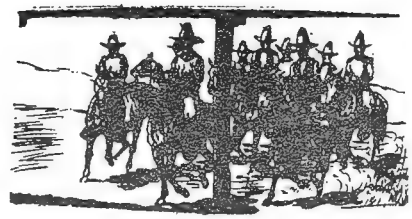
Laramie played for a half hour and managed to lose ten dollars.

He shrugged ruefully and turned away from the table. He waved at Clara across the room and left the saloon, wondering if Peters would allow him to charge off the ten dollars loss to expenses.

He would be back tonight to tangle purposely with Joe Lidski. At least the bouncer was wearing a gun. That would make it ideal for Laramie's purpose.

LARAMIE NELSON resumed his inspection of Virginia City, made a deal to hire a sorrel horse by the week, and returned to the hotel for supper. After a cigarette on the veranda he retired to his room to clean, oil and reload his six-shooter. He spent an hour in practice before the room's cloudy mirror; he hadn't done much gun handling for





several weeks. Soon the gun was as much a part of him as his right hand.

It wasn't speed that won most gunfights, but accuracy, unless the shoot-out took place across a card table. In that case a man with a big, heavy Colt was at a disadvantage if he faced a gambler palming a little .41 derringer.

With Joe Lidski he would depend on both speed and accuracy. He wanted to impress those watching with his speed, and he had no desire to kill Lidski. He could make his point by simply outdrawing the man. Laramie hoped Candy Kesson would be there to see it. He had made discreet inquiries around town about the Candy Kid and had learned that the youth, barely twenty-one, was respected and feared.

Laramie entered the Grand Circle in the middle of the evening. As Clara had said, it was a busy place. There were at least a hundred men at the two bars, the tables and clotted around the gaming layouts. There were four bartenders on duty, all sweating heavily and harried. Over a dozen painted girls circulated or perched on laps, their laughter high and shrill. Laramie didn't see Clara anywhere.

It was a boomtown atmosphere, loud, raucous, frenetic. Laramie had seen other boomtowns, where the rich ore seem to pour out of the earth in an inexhaustible flood, and the men engaged in digging it out spent their earnings as though it would indeed last forever.

He didn't see Joe Lidski right away. Finally he spotted the bouncer coming from one of the card rooms, those reserved for special and important guests. Lidski came out for only a moment, then re-entered the room.

Laramie bought a stein of beer and sat on one of the wooden benches to watch the stage show. The girls singing and dancing were loud if nothing else. They received scant attention, the bulk of the audience more intent on gambling. The show went on for nearly an hour before the finale, a boisterous cancan number.

Laramie returned to the bar with the empty stein just as the card room door opened and Lidski emerged. The man came directly to the bar, stopping alongside Laramie.

Laramie dropped the empty stein on the bouncer's foot.

Lidski yowled, hopping about on one foot, trying to yank his boot off. His anger seemed all out of proportion to the "accident." Then his baleful gaze focused on Laramie, and he charged, swinging both fists like clubs.

Laramie might easily have been downed, the fight over before it began, if the bouncer's footwork hadn't been impaired by his injured foot. Laramie rolled along the bar, ducking under the man's attack, and managed to avoid the bruising fists.

He stuck out a foot and tripped Lidski. The man screamed curses, stumbling to one knee. Laramie said loudly, "It was an accident, mister. What you taking on so for?"

"I'll kill you!" Lidski said through gritted teeth. That was all he said. He came up off the floor swinging again, wilder now as his rage mounted.

Laramie ducked and weaved and threw several swift punches that drew

blood from Lidski's beefy face. It had been a lucky break, the chance to drop the stein. Now he didn't have to pick a fight openly. Now the crowd was with him, believing him to be the one picked on. The circumstances could hardly be better, except that he now faced the rough task of stopping Lidski cold.

Lidski's temper was running out of control. One of his long arms swept up a bottle from the bar; he hurled it at Laramie and it smashed into a table. A woman's scream rose above the clamor. The two of them were contained now in a wide, loose circle of men, all watching the fight with glee. No one tried to stop it. With a small part of his mind Laramie noted the cheers, the shouts of encouragement, the bets being made as to the outcome.

For several moments Laramie was busy dodging Lidski's mad, bull-like rushes, and ducking the clubbing, roundhouse swings. He was sure that soon Lidski's temper would cool

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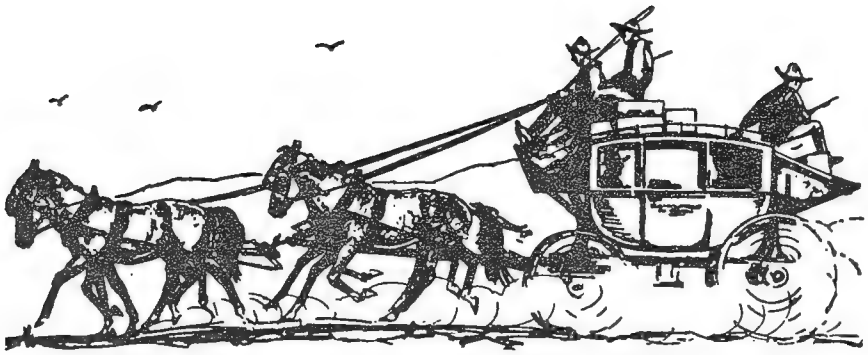


somewhat and he would settle into a machine-like efficiency and beat him to a pulp.

Laramie began taunting the man in an attempt to keep his anger at a boil. He called Lidski contemptuous names in a cutting voice.

Then Lidski made the move Laramie had been waiting for. His rage at white heat, he snatched at the revolver at his belt.

Instantly Laramie drew and fired, his hand a blur of speed. He aimed low, the bullet slamming into the bouncer's leg. He yelped and fell to the floor, his own shot splintering the planks at his feet.

Laramie jumped in close and kicked the gun out of Lidski's hand. The fight went out of the bouncer. He lay moaning, clutching at his leg with both hands, and rocking in agony.

Men crowded around Laramie, wanting to shake his hand, wanting to buy him drinks. One said, "I been hoping someone would do that."

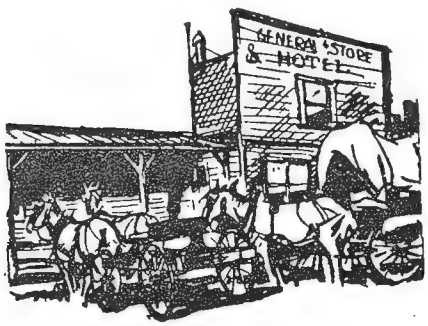
Apparently Joe Lidski was not the most popular man in town.

Laramie was scarcely touched, a bruished cheek, a cut lip. Several men gathered around the big bouncer and carried him into a back room. A doctor was sent for.

Laramie smiled, thanking the glad-handers. "I don't wish to seem unsociable, gents, but I don't want the marshal to get too good a look at me neither."

A man took his arm. "Come this way then."

Laramie was escorted to a rear door and sent on his way with a pat on the back. He made his way down a delivery alley to the street and back to his hotel room. His mission had been accomplished. If the fight didn't bring him to the attention of the wagon train looters, probably nothing else would.



He was not too surprised by a rap on his door a few minutes later. He drew his pistol. "Who is it?"

"I have a letter for Mr. Moduc."

The prearranged signal with one of the Pinkerton men.

Holding the pistol down by his thigh, Laramie opened the door. The man standing in the hallway was short and slight, wearing poor clothes and shabby boots, with several days growth of beard stubbling his narrow features.

Laramie said, "Who's the letter from?"

The man pushed past him with a quick glance down the hall. "Brock Peters, for hell's sake!"

Locking the door, Laramie grinned. "I had to be sure. You don't look like much."

"Don't judge me by the whiskers. I'm Frank Allison." He smiled thinly. "I heard you had a fight tonight. I'm sorry I didn't see it."

"He would have clobbered me with his fists. I had to shoot him in the leg. What do you have for me?"

"Not much. I'll tell you all I know, and you can ask questions. We don't have what you could call a lead."

"I've heard of someone called Candy Kesson."

"A very slick article. Candy is a gunman, and a fair thinker, too. He's small and young, but deadly as a sidewinder. The word is he's killed at least a dozen men and he's hardly twenty. We believe he works for a man named Nat Colton. Colton is a political insider. He's very close to Fred Royal and the talk is that he'll be Royal's right hand man if Royal is elected governor."

Laramie frowned. "I don't quite get the connection between this political angle and the gold shipment robberies."

Allison scratched his beard. "Neither do I." He smiled. "I reckon that's your job."

"If there is a connection. Is Candy the biggest outlaw in these parts?"

"I don't know about that, but he pulls a lot of weight for a young fella. He seems to ramrod a lot of men, and it took quite a few to move that gold as smoothly as it was done."

"Any idea yet as to what happened to the gold?"

"None. I figure it's still around somewhere, the bulk of it. It's too heavy to move far without attracting some attention."

Laramie paced back and forth. He was restless, itching for action. This way he just seemed to be marking time. He glanced at Allison and had to grin.

"Just what are you supposed to be in that get-up besides a saddle tramp?"

Allison said cheerfully, "That's it. I'm a bum. I came in on a freight, and I've been picking up odd jobs for a week now, keeping my eyes and ears open, for all the good it's done me. I can't go to the telegraph office without arousing suspicion, of course, so I'll have to contact you if I turn up anything. But it looks like it's mostly up to you."

"Are you eating?"

Allison scratched blunt fingers through the beard and signed deeply. "I'm trying to look underfed. It ain't easy not eating with money in my boot." He squinted at Laramie. "A word of warning. Watch out for that Lidski. He's meaner than a sack of snakes and he'll think you made a fool of him in front of his friends. My hunch is he'll even be fired."

"Is he connected with Candy Kesson?"

"Not that I know of."

Laramie took another turn around the room. "Where does this Candy hang out?"

"In town somewhere. I've seen him in the Grand Circle and other saloons, usually with several hangers-on. I can't follow him out of town because I'd be through if I'm seen on a horse."

"Candy isn't wanted for anything then?"

"Not that I've been able to learn." Allison got to his feet. "I'd better drift. How'll we keep in touch?"

"I'll have a horse stabled in the livery across the street. It seems a good place to meet. We could talk in one of the stalls, as though you're panhandling me.

I might even spare you a dime. I doubt Peters would approve more than that on the expense sheet."

Allison laughed. "Put two fingers to your hat if you have anything and I'll do the same."

Allison left the room quickly.

A short while later, Laramie was sitting on the bed about to remove his boots when there was a sharp rap on the door.

"Who is it?"

The voice in the hall was muffled. "Desk clerk."

The pistol held down by his thigh, Laramie opened the door. He was confronted by two men with drawn weapons pointed at his chest.

"Back in the room," one said.

LARAMIE NELSON backed up a few steps. The two men came in and shut the door. One, lean and dark, with brown hair hanging below his ears, stood with his back against the door. The other, the man who had spoken, was stocky, with a tough face and hard eyes that squinted slightly. He said, "You're Moduc?"

Laramie shrugged, grinning to himself. Well, he'd been itching for action. Now it looked like it was coming his way. He might be able to outgun the pair, but that would defeat his purpose. He dropped the pistol onto the bed. "I'm Moduc."

"Candy wants to see you," the stocky man said.

"Now?"

"Of course now!"

Laramie pretended reluctance. "Can't it wait until tomorrow?"

"Now, not tomorrow." The man motioned with his gun. "Candy wants a friendly visit."

"Yeah, I can see that," Laramie said dryly.

He strapped on his gunbelt, slipped on his coat and hat. The dark man opened the door and stayed behind to blow out the lamp. They went down the stairs single file, Laramie in the lead.

Virginia City sprawled in Gold Canyon, the place where the first gold discoveries had been made. Candy was staying near the edge of town in a squat, square house of brick and clapboard. A full moon rode high overhead, flooding the landscape with light. To the north, the hills, pitted and scarred by pockets and tunnels made by miners in search of ore, were clearly visible.

At their knock the door was opened by a slim, towheaded youtn, with a round, genial face. He looked about as dangerous as a playful puppy. It was only when he turned into the splash of lamplight that Laramie saw his eyes, cold and gray as slate.

The youth held out his hand. "I'm Bob Kesson. They call me Candy."

"Johnny Moduc." Candy's hand was

small, but it showed surprising strength.

Laramie looked around the room, It wasn't richly furnished—a turkey carpet on the floor, a mirror and several dismally dark pictures on the walls, a few sticks of furniture.

Candy took a horehound candy from his pocket and popped it into his mouth. "I saw your tussle with Joe Lidski. Pretty good."

"Any fight's good if you can get out of it in one piece."

"I also hear," Candy said innocently, "that you're not real anxious to meet up with lawmen."

Laramie squinted at him, then glanced back at the two men still in the doorway. He said curtly, "I'm not wanted in Nevada."

"Me neither!"

Candy's laughter was infectious, and Laramie found himself instinctively liking the youth.

Candy sobered. "Let's see how good you are with that iron you're toting." He strode to a side door and motioned outside.

"In the dark?" Laramie asked in astonishment.

"Moon's bright enough for me." Candy's grin was wolfish. "Time's a man has to shoot in the dark."

The stocky man followed them outside. The only outbuilding visible was a small barn. A bluff loomed darkly behind it.

"Toss one, Squint."

The man called Squint stooped over a wooden crate half filled with bottles. Standing again, he tossed a bottle high into the air. Moonlight glinted off the spinning glass.

Laramie drew his Colt, thumbing back the hammer, and smashed the bottle cleanly at the top of its trajectory. The sound of the shot echoed back from the bluff.

Candy looked at him with respect.

"Not bad. I understand you're looking for a job, Moduc. That right?"

"A man has to eat."

"Squint!"

Squint flung another bottle high. Laramie's hand flashed, the Colt boomed, and shards of glass fell around them. Laramie ejected the two shell cases and reloaded.

Candy held out his hand, and Squint gave him a bottle. "I'm a sort of strawboss for a man named Nat Colton. Ever hear of him?"

"Don't think so."

Candy flipped the bottle without warning, only a few feet above the ground. Laramie's shot shattered it.

Candy grunted.

"Not bad." His head swung around, his gaze pinning Laramie. "Looks to me like Lidski got off easy."

"I didn't want to kill him."

"Could be a bad mistake. Lidski's a backshooter." He gestured toward the house. "This place belongs to Nat Colton. He's over to Carson City right now with Fred Royal. An election's coming up. Guess you heard about that?"

"I read something about. I'm not much for politics."

Candy pulled a thin cigar from his pocket, rolled the end between his lips and struck a match. He said, "You ever handle men? I mean, were you in the war maybe?"

"I was."

"How many men?"

Laramie shrugged. "Thirty, maybe forty."

"That so?" Candy's look was sly. "You join up or did they get you."

"They got me," Laramie lied. "I was on my way to the border. Man says he was short of cavalrymen. I left the army first foggy night."

Candy nodded to Squint, holding up two fingers.

Squint tossed two bottles into the air. Candy drew and fired twice, one shot following the other so closely they sounded almost as one. Both bottles were hit at the top of their arcs.

Candy holstered his gun without glancing at the shattered glass and started back toward the house as the

echoes of the shots were still bouncing off the bluff, throwing away his cigar.

Laramie was impressed. Candy could handle a gun, no doubt about that. His draw had been lightning fast, smooth as silk. Laramie had to wonder how he'd fare against the youngster if he ever had to draw against him.

Inside, Kesson scooped up several hard candies from a box and popped them into his mouth. "If you're looking for a job, I think I've got something for you." They were alone now, the two men outside somewhere.

"What kind of a job?" Laramie asked.

"You that particular?"

Laramie grinned crookedly. "I don't wait on tables."

Candy lowered his voice slightly. "One of our problems is finding men who are both fighters and who can think. You'd be surprised how few of that kind are around. I've seen you in a fight, and I know you can handle a gun. But I don't know how good you can think."

"I've been in some tight spots. Sometimes I shot my way out, other times I've had to think my way out. I'm still alive and kicking."

Candy smiled thinly. "What you wanted for?"

Laramie shrugged. "Robbing folks, this and that." He slapped his pistol. "This here's my meal ticket and I've lived pretty high on the hog with it."

All of a sudden Candy seemed to make up his mind. "All right. I think you can cut it. We'll go see Nat Colton over to Carson. I have to come right back. You'll probably be staying around awhile."

Laramie strode to the window, looking down the canyon at the town. Virginia City was built on the side of a mountain, with the railroad depot down below. It was a shabby town; low frame

buildings, tents, sheds hastily thrown together, and lines of privies. There were long, low buildings with smokestacks and flumes and below, near the railroad tracks, gray mounds of crushed quartz.

It was a dismal picture. He would be glad to get away to Carson City. And it looked like things were finally beginning to move. Excitement gripped him.

I'll have to get in touch with Allison, he thought absently; *let him know where I'm going.*

He turned. "When do I leave?"

"We'll take the train in the morning."

Candy accompanied him to the door and stepped outside with him. He started to speak, and then, with shocking suddenness, he rammed his shoulder into Laramie, sending him reeling against the wall.

At almost the same moment Laramie saw a splash of orange flame blossom out by the road, something thudded into the wall at the exact spot where he had been standing a moment ago, and the sound of a shot roared.

Before Laramie could recover his balance, Candy had drawn his gun and fired twice. A scream sounded, and a hulking figure staggered into the oblong of light thrown by the open door, collapsing into the dirt face down almost at their feet.

They walked over to the prone figure. Candy turned the body over with the toe of his boot. It was Joe Lidski, face slack in death.

"Told you it was a mistake not to kill him when you had a chance," Candy said dryly.

Laramie drew a deep breath. "You must have sharp eyes, seeing in the dark like that, even with the moon out."

"Some people say I'm part cat."

"I reckon I owe you my life. Thanks." Laramie put out his hand.

Candy took it, grinning engagingly. "My pleasure."

As Laramie started off, Candy called after him. "I'll be knocking on your door with the chickens, Johnny. We'll have time for breakfast before the train leaves for Carson."

LARAMIE NELSON was waiting the next morning, his bags packed, when the Candy Kid knocked on his door. Laramie had been out earlier and contacted Allison, informing the operative of the trip to Carson City and the upcoming meeting with Colton.

"I'll follow you to Carson," Allison had said. "Soon as I can hitch a ride on a freight wagon."

Laramie and Candy had breakfast in the hotel dining room. As they ate steak and eggs, Laramie leafed through a local paper. "I see the governor's race is heating up."

"It figures to."

"What kind of a man is this Royal?"

Candy shrugged slim shoulders. "All right, I guess. I've only met him a couple of times. He's well liked around the state and rich. Owns a big ranch out of Carson a ways and a couple of good paying mines. Colton's my boss. I take my orders from him."

Laramie folded his paper and tried to sound casual. "Just how does Colton figure in?"

"He's worked for Fred Royal for some time and it's my guess he's slated for a top spot in the government if Royal's elected."

"You worked for Colton long, Candy?"

"Not long. A year." Candy lit one of his thin cigars and looked at Laramie through eyes narrowed by the drift of smoke. "Where you from, Johnny?"

Laramie didn't welcome the change of subject, but he knew it was far too early to press hard for information. It could easily arouse Candy's suspicions. "I came west from the river towns along the Big Muddy. I found it a bit healthier farther west." He finished his coffee and rolled a cigarette. "What time is the train?"

"We have just enough time to make it."

The train to Carson City wasn't crowded, and they found two seats together in the coach car. Although the railroad had reached Virginia City only a short time ago, the railroad cars were old, uncomfortable, the seats hard and well-worn, the floors stained with tobacco juice. The floor of the one in which Laramie and Candy rode swirled with debris at every gust of wind.

Laramie managed to question Candy again, making it all seem the natural curiosity of a man new to the territory and undertaking a new job.

Colton, according to Candy, was a powerful man, a leader of men and destined for better things. "He's got more gumption in his little finger than Fred Royal has in his whole body!"

"I gather you don't think much of Royal?"

"I don't. He's got the money, but he's wishywashy. I swear I don't see what people see in that man. Of course," he said cautiously, "I only know what I hear, like I already told you. I ain't acquainted with him much personal." Then he brightened, grinning. "But his wife, now there's a woman!"

Diana Royal, according to Candy, was a willful but beautiful female.

Laramie used the newspaper he'd bought in Virginia City to raise the subject of the gold shipment robberies. "It says here they haven't caught the bandits yet."

Candy snorted. "And they ain't likely to neither!"

"What makes you say that?"

Candy turned cautious again. "They're no closer to them now than in the beginning. That tells you something, don't it?"

Laramie made his voice wistful. "That certainly was a pile of money. I'd like to have a chance at it."

"Stick around." Candy grinned slyly. "You just might get that chance."

Laramie said carefully, "What do you mean?"

"You'll have to wait and see," Candy said enigmatically.

Laramie had to be content with that for the time being.

He scrubbed his jaw, thinking hard. Running a political campaign took money, he'd always heard. Had Colton stole the money to finance Royal's campaign for governor? It didn't seem too likely, not if Royal was as rich as Candy had indicated.

Laramie rolled a cigarette and smoked thoughtfully. Maybe Colton was stealing the gold for purposes of his own. Somehow, Laramie had a strong hunch that Colton and Candy Kesson were behind the robberies, and Colton was in Carson. Maybe the gold was there, too.

He might very well be heading right to it.

Candy had put out his cigar and was dozing, his head lolling back on the seat. For some time Laramie had been noticing Army troops spaced along the railroad tracks at regular intervals. He mentioned this to Candy.

Candy stretched, yawning. "The Army's been moving men into the area in numbers since the last holdup."

Laramie's interest quickened. "You mean another gold shipment's going out soon? By rail this time?"

Candy grinned lazily. "Now how would I know about that, Johnny boy?"

The train was pulling into Carson City. Although Carson was the state capitol, it wasn't as bustling as Virginia City, the people on the streets less boisterous, more soberly dressed. Laramie guessed that most of them were

somehow connected with the state government.

Candy hired a buggy to drive them out to Royal's ranch about five miles out of town.

It was an impressive spread. There was a big brick house, stables and corrals, a long bunkhouse, and a smaller house behind the big one where Candy took Laramie. It was more private, Candy explained; the big house was full of people coming and going with election business.

Candy left Laramie cooling his heels and was alone with Colton for a half hour before Laramie was ushered in and introduced to Colton. Candy left the two men alone.

Colton was a small man of about forty, but domineering, energetic. His hair was bright red, his eyes a cold, pale blue. His movements were quick, decisive. He was something of a dandy, a military flavor about his manner and his clothing.

Colton said, "Candy has been telling me about you, Moduc."

"All good, I hope."

"Not only today," Colton said curtly. "He wired me yesterday from Virginia City and I've had you checked out."

Laramie was slightly surprised by the man's frankness.

He was even more surprised when Colton opened the roll-top desk and took out a thin sheaf of wanted posters. The top one described one Johnny Moduc, wanted for murder in Louisiana.

Laramie grunted, shrugging. Brock Peters had done his work well.

"I have to know who I'm dealing with," Colton said.

"Yeah, I reckon you do."

Colton smiled meagerly, his military manner relaxing a trifle. He put the posters carefully back into the desk and closed it. "There's no need from me to telegraph Louisiana, but I am surprised you haven't changed your name."

Laramie wondered if that was a subtle threat or a warning. He said, "I didn't bother because I didn't know the poster was still out on me." He drummed his fingers on the butt of his Colt. "I'll change it right now."

"A good idea." Colton nodded crisply. "To what?"

"Uh . . . Johnny Morgan."

"Hmmmm," Colton said. "I knew a gunnie once named Morgan. The so-and-so let himself be drygulched by a stinking sheepherder. But it'll be a good name for you." He took a cigar from a box on his desk without offering Laramie one. "I'm going to send you out to Bill Jessop. He'll show you what we're doing here."

Colton stared at him, pale eyes appraising. "Fred Royal's going to be next governor of this state, but it's a state in great disorder. The booming mines have attracted all sorts of drifters and riffraff. Policing in most areas in the state is a big joke."

"Policing?" Laramie said, taken aback.

Colton said forcibly, "I'm building a force of Regulators, the same as the Rangers down in Texas. They're needed here. They'll have regular police powers, acting under me."

Laramie listened, astonished. Of all the things he had been expecting, a private police force was the last thing in his mind. Was Colton building up his own private army?

Colton was saying, "We must have law and order in Nevada, and Royal agrees with me. This is the quickest way of getting it. But we need men to lead. Candy thinks you're the kind of man we're looking for? Are you?"

Laramie rubbed his chin, not wishing to appear too eager to join a police group. He finally said, "I wasn't exactly planning on joining up with some law force."

"You won't be sorry," Colton said. "That's all I can tell you for now. Except I'll start you at three hundred a month and found."

Laramie detected the emphasis on "found" and three hundred a month was three times what a good law officer earned. He said, "Deal me in."

Colton's meager smile flickered. "You're smart. We're going to have to use smart men, I can tell you. Come along." He opened the door and ushered Laramie out. "We'll have a drink on it. There're some people I want you to meet."

He led Laramie across to the big house. Laramie didn't see Candy anywhere. He asked about him.

"Candy had to hurry back to Virginia City," Colton said. "He asked me to pass on his apologies and he'll be seeing you before long."

In the big house a group of people were gathered around a couple, a man and a woman. Colton introduced them as Fred and Diana Royal. Laramie saw a slight, graying man, stooped and older than he would have thought. Yet his grip was surprisingly firm. "Welcome, Mr. Morgan."

Diana was younger, vibrant, quite dark and very lovely. Laramie felt his face flush slightly. She was everything Candy had said she would be. Laramie could see that Nat Colton thought so, too. Colton never strayed far from her side.

A servant came around with wine, and Laramie drank, basking in Diana's smiles.

"You're from the east, Mr. Morgan?"

"Yes. St. Louis, New Orleans . . ."

"I love New Orleans," she said wistfully. "It's so different from this desert and these brown hills." She grimaced and turned to her husband. "Have you finished your business?"

"Yes, my dear."

"Then let's go." She smiled at Laramie. "We have to go into Carson." She said a few words to the others and then swept out of the room, trailed by her husband.

Laramie saw Colton looking after Royal with an amused, somewhat patronizing smile on his narrow face.

When the Royals had gone, Nat Colton raised his glass. "To Governor Royal," he said with a straight face.

They all laughed.

BILL JESSOP had about a hundred and fifty men training in a military-style camp set up on the ranch.

Jessop was a big, blustery man; he had a thick head of black hair and piercing gray eyes. He had been a major in the Confederate Cavalry, serving under Joe Wheeler.

"We've got agents out," he told Laramie, "scouring the countryside for more men. We hope to put 'em all in proper uniform soon. You were with the South, sir?"

"I tried to be," Laramie lied. "But I was waylaid by the Unions and forced into a unit. I got out quick as I could."

Jessop snorted, shaking his big head. "Infernal nerve! That's the North for you!"

Jessop showed him around the camp, perhaps sixty tents laid out in neat rows. There were also several huts for officers and two cook shacks. Beyond the huts were corrals where dust was rising from a hundred or more milling horses. And from the other side of the corrals came the howls and yells of many men, some giving orders, some swearing.

"The men are drilling," Jessop said proudly. "You'll be sharing a hut with Lieutenant Barnes, who happens to be away on assignment at the moment."

It was little more than a clapboard shack, with two bunk beds, a small square mirror, pegs on the walls for hanging clothes, one bench and a Franklin stove for heat. A lantern hung on a nail.

Fred Royal, Laramie thought, must

be sure of winning his election. Or Nat Colton. He remembered Colton's mocking toast and the knowing grins. There was something stirring under the surface here, something dark and evil.

Laramie took possession of the hut, then attended a staff meeting where he met two other officers. He was assigned a troop and given the title of lieutenant. He would be furnished a horse and given a uniform when they were ready. Although the discipline was less severe than that of a military camp, it was like one in most other respects.

At midnight Allison came rapping on his door.

Laramie was surprised. "How'd you get into the camp? It's supposed to be guarded."

"Not all that well." Allison grinned. He still looked like a saddle tramp. "You forget I'm an experienced forager. The guards are in a card game right now."

Laramie lit a stump of candle, setting it on the floor. "How'd you get to Carson?"

"Begged a ride on an Army train. They're patroling the tracks between here and Virginia City. What's going on here?"

"I haven't learned much yet. I've signed on as a Regulator. Colton calls this bunch the Regulators. He's organizing a military force to police the state when Royal's elected. Or so he says."

Allison scratched his bearded chin, frowning. "Then you're on the wrong side, ain't you?"

"I'm not sure. There's some connection between Colton and the Candy Kid, I don't know what yet. I strongly suspect Candy ramrods the gold robberies, yet he works for Colton. And Colton is the power behind Royal."

"That's the talk I hear."

"Since the Army is patroling the tracks, it looks like they're going to ship the gold by train the next time. If so, they're certainly not keeping it a secret."

"The Army commander thinks he's got enough men in the area now not to have to resort to trickery or secrecy again." Allison frowned. "This bunch of Regulators or whatever—do you think they're being used in the gold raids?"

"I doubt it. Most of the men, including the commander, a man named William Jessop, are ex-Confederates. They're not outlaws, just ex-soldiers in a lost cause and spoiling for a fight." Laramie rolled a cigarette as he talked. "But I have a feeling Nat Colton is tied in somewhere. That's why I took this job, figuring to be close to headquarters."

"It may tie you down too much."

Laramie nodded, smoking thoughtfully. "There's that. Allison, if the next gold shipment goes by train, what do you think are the chances?"

"In my opinion?" Allison's eyes twinkled. "In a word, poor. If you think about the other two robberies . . . Slick, well-planned jobs. The gent commanding the Army isn't the smartest. I think he could be fooled somewhere, any of a hundred ways."

Laramie sighed, scowling down at the yellow, flickering candle beginning to sputter in its own grease. He was one man caught in a web of intrigue; he felt squeezed by the power plays going on about him. On one side by the Army and the Federal Government, on another by Candy Kesson and his riders,

and on the third by the private army of Nat Colton.

And there was always Brock Peters, ready to come down on him like a house if the assignment wasn't carried out successfully. It wasn't the sort of job he relished. He wished now that he had said no to the President. But what kind of a man turns down the president of his country?

Allison broke into his thoughts. "There's one other thing."

Laramie looked up. "What's that?"

"A rumor, may be nothing more than that. I heard it from a drunk, and he heard it in the back room of one of Carson's finest emporiums . . ."

"What is it?" Laramie demanded impatiently.

Allison held up his hand. "I'm merely telling you what I heard, mind. It's hard to swallow. My drunken friend was supposed to be passed out and overheard two men talking. Nat Colton will wait until Royal is elected governor, then kick him out and take over."

Laramie stared. "You mean, take over the state by force?"

"I told you it's hard to swallow."

"What else?"

"That's all. My friend, the drunk, was noticed and booted out into the alley."

Laramie was silent, thinking. A story overheard by a drunk. Yet it could explain a lot of things. Colton's private army, for instance. He asked, "How about the cavalry? How many are there?" "Four troops, none of them at full strength. I'd guess about two hundred altogether."

"How many in Virginia City?"

"I don't know. I'd guess maybe a hundred on patrol along the railroad line, maybe more. That leaves less than a hundred in Virginia City. If you're thinking how many troops on the gold train, probably fifty. The commander will think that's enough, what with the troops patrolling the tracks. Unless he can be convinced there's more of a threat, and he's pretty bullheaded."

Laramie nodded. If that was true, and it probably was, then Candy and his raiders would be almost an equal match for the Army men on the train, plus the fact that the element of surprise would be on their side. And the more soldiers killed, the fewer left around to oppose Colton's take-over of the state. It was all beginning to make sense.

Allison asked, "You think I should go back to Virginia City?"

"No." Laramie snuffed out the guttering candle between his fingers. "Best stick around Carson. See if you can keep tabs on Colton, who he meets with and so on. See if you can learn more about this scheme of his."

Allison agreed. After he had gone into the night as silently as he had come, Laramie lay awake on his bunk,

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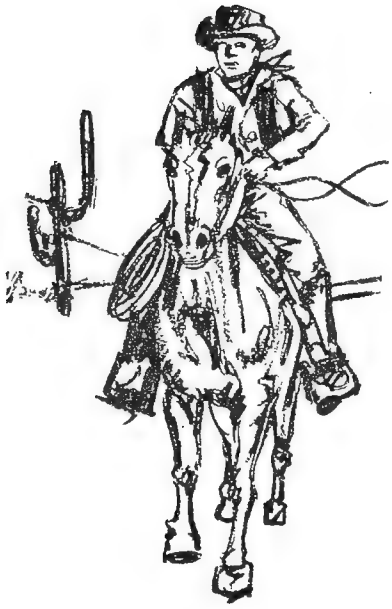


hands behind his head, staring into the darkness. Colton take over a state of the Union?

It was a grandiose scheme, the plan of a madman. Yet it might work. Colton had many things going for him. The Federal Government had its hands full and was short of funds. There was only one good way to move Federal troops into Nevada quickly, by the railroad, and the railroad could be blown sky high in a hundred places.

Of course, there was one way to stop Nat Colton, Laramie thought; shoot him.

He had no orders to assassinate anyone, and he doubted if he could commit murder in cold blood, even if ordered. Anyway, he'd been sent here to learn who was stealing Nevada gold, not to foil the plans of a man bent on seizing a state for himself.

It could be the result of something a drunk had dreamed on a belly full of rotgut whiskey. The more Laramie thought about it, the more outlandish it seemed.

He finally fell into a restless slumber.

The next morning Jessop set him to drilling troops. Laramie was given a platoon, thirty-six men on horseback, and for two hours he drilled them relentlessly. He had two good sergeants, men who had learned their trade shooting at Yankees.

After the drill they rubbed down the horses, then had rifle practice until noon at a crude rifle range set up against a hillside. The midday meal consisted of soup, bread and white beans. They were given an hour to digest it.

Laramie rolled a brown cigarette and strolled back along the company street toward his hut.

Snake Fisher came out of a tent and stepped directly into Laramie's path.

Laramie knew the man instantly.

His face slack with astonishment, Fisher stopped short. "I'll be damned! Laramie Nelson! What's a Pinkerton man doing here?"

LARAMIE NELSON could only nod. "Hello, Snake."

He had been responsible for sending Snake Fisher to prison three years back. Had the man been released or had he escaped? It didn't really matter. Snake knew him and could give the show away. Laramie supposed the man had another name, but it was easy to see why he was called Snake. His head was somewhat triangular in shape, he had a curious way of weaving his head, and his black eyes were flat, unblinking.

Recovering from his surprise, Snake said, "I'm using another handle these days. Expect you're doing the same?"

"Johnny Morgan."

Snake nodded. "Roy Douglas." He grinned. "Maybe we'd better have a little talk."

Laramie pointed out his hut. "We'd best not be seen together. I'm not supposed to know anybody here."

Snake Fisher nodded. "After supper."

Laramie was waiting when the man knocked on the hut long after dark. He had little choice but to wait. Laramie had turned down the lantern and hung it on a wire by the single window which he had covered with a blanket.

Laramie latched the door after him and motioned to the bunk.

Snake sat, head weaving, smiling slyly. Laramie had a good idea what was on the man's mind. And he was right. Snake came quickly to the point.

"You want to keep me quiet. Your being here means you're what you Pinkertons call undercover, ain't it?"

Laramie waited, saying nothing.

"Well, I don't care nothing about these hombres playing soldier. I only signed on because I'm flat. You can keep me quiet easy."

"How's that?"

"Five hundred dollars."

Laramie almost smiled. "That's a lot of money. I don't have it."

"But you can get it. The Pinkertons is rich."

"Three hundred," Laramie said. "But I'll need three or four days to get it."

"Oh, I'll give you the time. But the price is five hundred. You know how it is."

Laramie sighed. "I know how it is."

Snake left, head weaving, grinning.

Laramie felt depressed. This was a complication he didn't need. He had to get into Carson City and wire Peters for the money. It galled him to pay a man like Snake Fisher, but it was necessary. Maybe it wouldn't matter five days from now if Colton knew he was a Pinkerton. Then he relaxed, smiling faintly, thinking of Peters' profane reaction at being asked to fork over five hundred dollars in bribe money.

He ran into a snag the next morning when he asked Jessop for permission to go into Carson. Jessop refused without even asking Laramie's reason for going. "You only started yesterday. Nobody, officers nor men, get leave until the weekend."

"I'll only be gone an hour or so."

"Doesn't matter. I've got my orders same as you. The answer's no."

Laramie sighed and gave up for the moment. He put his men through the morning drill, his mind ganwing at the problem. Allison had managed to get in and out without being seen, so why couldn't he?

At the rifle range he left a sergeant in charge and strolled back to the corrals. If he could slip away now, he could ride into town, send his telegram and get back by the noon meal. The chances were good he wouldn't be missed.

There was a guard lounging in the shade of the shed where the saddles were kept. There was no chance of getting a horse saddled and riding out without the guard spotting him. Laramie swore under his breath and walked toward the cook shack. He could walk, of course, but five miles to a horseman was out of the question.

He stopped short. There was a saddled horse by the cookshack.

Laramie didn't hesitate. He walked directly to the horse and gathered up the reins, leading the animal around the shack. There was considerable noise all around, but no one saw him. The camp was patroled but not fenced.

Laramie led the horse into the brush directly behind the cookshack. In minutes he was out of sight of the camp. He paused and listened. He heard nothing but rifle fire from the range. He looked the animal over. A weary dun, with a worn saddle.

"You're not much to get shot for, boss," he muttered, and mounted up.

It took less than an hour to reach town and get off his telegram to Peters at the Denver Pinkerton office. He saw no one he knew. He briefly debated looking up Allison, then decided against

it. If he rode directly back to camp, there was a good chance his absence wouldn't have been noted.

He was halfway back when he heard the hoofbeats of racing horses on the road. Laramie turned off the road immediately, but they had already seen him, a half-dozen mounted men rounding a curve up ahead. The fact that he had tried to avoid them caused a shout. A Winchester barked, the lead streaking overhead. Laramie reined in. He didn't have the horseflesh under him for a chase.

He recognized a couple of the men as being from the camp. One shouted, "By God, we're in luck! This's him!"

Pistols covered him, and Laramie felt his hopes plummet. How had they found him out?

They took his gun, turned him about and headed back toward the Royal ranch. One man was sent on ahead to inform Nat Colton they had captured Johnny Moduc.

"What's up, gents?" Laramie asked.

"I expect you know Roy Douglas?

Old friend of yours, ain't he, Mr. Pinkerton?"

"Yes, I know him," Laramie said, knowing what was coming.

"He sold you out, friend. Colton paid him more'n you promised."

They put him in a stout shack not far from the main camp. Two men were left to guard the shack. Laramie was searched but not tied.

Lighting a match, Laramie saw that he was in a plank-floored room obviously once used for storing blasting powder. There were signs lettered *danger*, leaning against one wall, and empty boxes scattered about. There was one tiny barred window, letting in almost no light.

The guards settled down by the door outside, and Laramie could hear the murmur of this voices through the cracks between the planks.

The afternoon passed slowly, and night fell. No one came near him. The guards weren't relieved, and Laramie could hear them grumbling. He stood at the window, feeling the night breeze on his face. The window looked away from the houses and the camp, toward the hills. What would Colton do? Shoot him? Probably. A man like Colton would charge him with treason and shoot him without a qualm. But why the delay? Maybe Colton was—

Something said, "Nelson, Shhh!"

Startled, Laramie blinked, and Allison materialized out of the gloom beside the shack, grinning, a finger to his lips. The agent passed a pistol through the bars. He whispered, "Make a fuss."

Laramie took the weapon. He nodded, and Allison disappeared. Laramie wondered how Allison had learned of his predicament. But he didn't have time to ponder that now.

He pounded on the door with the butt of the pistol, evoking a snarl, "Shut up in there!"

Laramie pounded again, and kicked the door. A chain rattled, then a lock clicked. The door opened a crack, and a man said, "Step back to the far wall, mister."

Laramie tossed a stick at the wall, and the door opened wider at its clatter. Laramie was in pitch darkness, but he could see the moonlight glint off the barrel of the guard's pistol, and the silhouette of his head. The guard stepped inside warily, and Laramie hit him just behind the ear with the pistol.

The guard's own gun exploded as he fell, the bullet thudding into the far wall. The guard outside yelled. As Laramie stepped over the guard's body and slipped outside, there was a furious exchange of shots, then silence.

He saw the second guard sprawled, face down. Laramie kicked his pistol away, just in case, and ran to Allison, who was lying a few yards away.

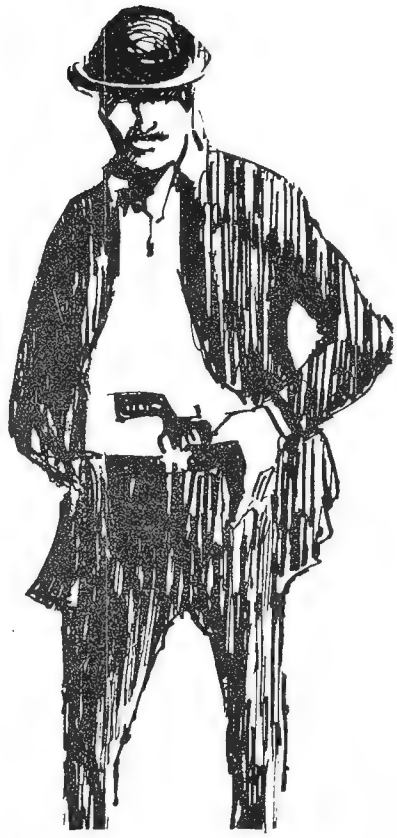
Allison was dead.

Laramie experienced an immense sense of loss. He hadn't realized how much he had come to like the unassuming agent. He knelt by the man, anger working in him. He saw, without immediately comprehending, lights flickering on in the big house a few hundred yards distant. Someone would be investigating the shots.

He searched Allison's pockets, finding a wallet, a silver watch and an envelope. He stuffed it all into his pockets, stripped the cartridge belt from the dead man, took Allison's gun and ran in a crouch toward the big house.

There were low, adobe walls enclosing a flower garden and much shrubbery. Laramie ducked, seeing men running from the camp. A man yelled, "Fetch some lanterns!"

Laramie glanced toward the corrals. That way was cut off. Men were running to and fro. Behind him, Laramie heard shouts as they discovered the bodies. A



search was being hurriedly organized. Lanterns flared up like enormous fireflies in the night, and saddles were being slapped on horses in the corrals.

Then Laramie saw Diana Royal. She had come out on the porch and was watching the excitement. She was alone and fully dressed. In a moment she was joined by her husband, who lit a cigar and stared at the activity.

Now Diana said something to her husband and went inside again. Fred Royal came off the porch and across the yard. He started as Laramie Nelson rose up beside him. "By God, sir!"

Laramie said, "It's me they're looking for, Mr. Royal."

"You know my name?" Royal squinted at him. "Are you the Pinkerton man?"

Laramie hesitated, then said, "I am, yes."

Royal took his arm and drew him quickly toward the house. "You mustn't be seen." He pushed Laramie inside, then blew out the lamp. "My wife's gone up to bed." He closed the door and locked it. "What's this all about, Mr.—What's your name, Moduc?"

"No, sir. Laramie Nelson."

Royal seemed genuinely concerned, and his actions seemed to indicate that he had no thought of giving Laramie away. Could it be he knew nothing of Nat Colton's scheme to become king of Nevada?

Royal puffed on his cigar. "I had always assumed the Pinkerton Agency was on the side of law and order, Mr. Nelson."

Taken aback, Laramie blinked. "We are, sir. That's why I'm here."

"Nat Colton accuses you of murder, treason, conspiracy and what not. I'm afraid I don't understand."

"There is a conspiracy, Mr. Royal, but not on the part of the Pinkertons."

"A conspiracy?"

"Yeah. When you are elected governor of Nevada, you will be shoved aside by Nat Colton and he will take over with the help of his Regulators."

Laramie could see the effect of his words, even in the gloom of the darkened room. Royal gasped and stepped back, his eyes widening.

"That is a monstrous charge, sir! Can you prove any of this?"

Laramie went to the window, looking out toward the hut. Men with lanterns were carrying the bodies away.

"Mr. Royal, I was sent here to look into the gold robberies. I have every reason to believe they are connected with Colton's scheme to take over the state."

"I asked for proof, not what you believe! I have known Nat Colton for a good many years!"

"At the moment proof is hard to come by." Laramie sighed and motioned toward the hut. "A very good agent was just killed out there, a man who might have supplied your proof." He paused. Now Royal was silent. "I ask you to think about Colton's little private army, his Regulators, stationed on your own land. For what purpose, Mr. Royal?"

"Why, to bring law and order back to the state. It's overrun by criminals and killers. The gold train robberies should be proof of that!"

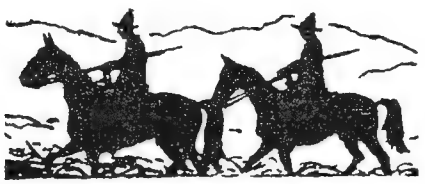
"An army of several hundred men with their only authority coming from Nat Colton?" Laramie said softly. "An army of malcontents, bitter men mostly recruited from a lost cause, new who hate the Union and would welcome a country of their own where they would no longer be the defeated enemy?"

"But I . . ." Royal was visibly shaken now. "But there are Federal troops in the state."

"Very few and spread thin. Colton's Regulators could overwhelm them easily."

Royal began to pace in his agitation. "I had no idea, no blessed idea."

"I believe you, sir, but it is in your power to stop them. And there's something else. I believe that the gold robberies are paying for the Regulators."



Royal halted. "I must have proof, man, proof! Your charges are simply incredible! You're inferring that Mr. Colton intends to secede from the Union and form his own private state!"

"That's it exactly."

"I simply cannot believe it! I must have time to think." Royal took a step. "Can you bring me proof, Mr. Nelson?"

"Can you supply me with a horse, sir?"

LARAMIE NELSON was on the run. He couldn't ride into Carson. If Colton's men caught him again, he'd probably be shot on sight. Besides, he had no reason to ride into Carson City. There was certainly no reason to pick up the five hundred to pay Snake Fisher. He could wire for help, for a replacement for Allison, but things were moving too rapidly for that.

He rode toward Virginia City. He needed proof of Colton's treasonous intentions, not only for Fred Royal, but for Brock Peters and ultimately President Grant. Laramie was sure Royal was swayed; the fact that the man had sneaked Laramie away was evidence of that. But how could he get the proof needed? For some reason his thoughts swung to Candy Kesson.

The weather had turned cold and cloudy, threatening rain. The horse Royal had given him was a powerful bay, his stride eating up the miles even in the dark. Laramie followed the railroad. At several points he was challenged by an Army patrol. He managed to elude them in the darkness. They were reasonably alert, at least.

He reached Virginia City shortly before dawn. He stabled the bay and rented a room in a cheap hotel from a yawning clerk. Dead tired, Laramie removed his boots and gunbelt and went to sleep without taking off the rest of his clothes.

It was past noon and raining when he awoke. Lacking shaving equipment, or anything else, he washed as best he could and left the hotel. The rain was coming down in sheets. There was a dry goods store in the block, where he bought a poncho. Farther along was a restaurant. Not knowing how far the hunt for him had spread, Laramie kept a wary eye out. No one seemed to notice him.

As he ate breakfast in the restaurant, a troop of cavalry splashed along the muddy streets outside, rattling and clanking, the troopers swearing at the rain.

A man at the next table said, "Them boys is guarding the gold shipment going out this morning."

"Naw, that ain't till tomorrow," his table companion said.

"Then what they doing out there now?"

Laramie finished his meal and rolled a cigarette, staring morosely out at the muddy street. If it was public knowledge that a gold shipment was going out, the Army must be confident.

Or overconfident. That struck Laramie as the most likely.

He ducked his head through the poncho again, put on his hat and went out. The poncho, in addition to protecting him against the rain, offered a sort of crude disguise.

Almost at once he saw Candy Kesson.

The Candy Kid was crossing the street, picking his way delicately through the mud, head down. He stepped up onto the veranda down from Laramie and scraped the mud from his boots.

Laramie slipped into a doorway, sixgun drawn. When Candy came abreast of him, Laramie said softly, "Candy . . ." He showed the other the muzzle of the Colt, held under the edge of the poncho.

Candy saw him instantly. His hand started for his gun, then halted, his gaze flicking from the round muzzle up to Laramie's face. He seemed unalarmed. He said easily, "Howdy, Johnny."

He stepped into the doorway alongside Laramie, his glance raking the street. There were few passersby, and none seemed to notice anything untoward about two men huddled together in a doorway out of the rain.

"Nat Colton wired me, figgering you might head this way. I figgered different. It appears I'm wrong again. You sure took me in, Johnny." For just a moment his round face tightened dangerously. "Might even say you made me out a fool. I don't know as I like that much."

"The name's Nelson, Laramie Nelson."

"Your Pinkerton name, I'd guess?"

"Yeah." Laramie nodded. "When're you holding up the gold, Candy?"

Candy's eyes rounded. Then he laughed heartily.

"You got your brass, Johnny boy, I'll hand you that. Too bad you got to be a damn Pinkerton."

"I guess that depends which side of the fence you're sitting." He studied the youth in speculation. "What's going to happen when Colton takes over? Where do you fit in?"

Candy started. "What?"

Laramie smiled with inward satisfaction. His hunch was right; Candy didn't know all of Colton's plans. "You mean

he doesn't bother to tell you all his plans?"

Candy's eyes became flat and cold. He reached into his pocket for a horehound candy and popped it into his mouth. "I know all the plans."

"Well now, it appears you don't," Laramie drawled. "Those Regulators of his, for instance—"

"I know about them. It's a police force for Fred Royal."

"That's what Colton tells everybody, including you. But I see it as something else. The Regulators are Colton's private army. They're not getting any police training. I see it this way. Your job is to get the gold to pay for the army, then you're through. You're a gold thief. When Colton takes over, he can't afford to have you around to point a finger at him."

Candy scowled. "Take over what? You keep saying that."

"Colton will help Royal get elected, then he'll push him out, maybe kill him, then take over the state government."

"Take over the whole state?" Candy was incredulous.

"That's the way I see it."

Candy hooted. "Johnny boy, you've been chewing loco weed! That's crazy—" Candy stopped, frowning. "If what you say is true, that makes Nat Colton a traitor!"

"That's it exactly. And he's using you, What does that make you?"

Candy snorted. "It makes me nothing but a fool for listening to you! I don't know why, but you're lying! I've never heard such—"

Laramie's attention strayed, his gaze caught by something across the street. Snake Fisher had just stepped out of the Grand Circle. He stood under the shelter of the saloon's roof, head weaving as he looked both ways along the street, as though searching for someone. A gun was strapped low on his thigh.

Laramie turned his attention back to Candy. He jabbed the snout of his Colt into the youth's belly just below the ribcage, drawing a sharp gasp.

"I'll take your gun, Candy."

He relieved Candy of his weapon and stuck it in his belt. Then he jabbed with the gun again.

"We're going to walk to your place, Candy. My gun will be in your ribs all the way, hidden under the poncho. If you so much as blink an eye without me saying so, I'll blow a hole in you big enough to drive a wagon through!"

"Walk? In this rain?" Candy said in dismay. "I don't know what you're scheming now, but why can't we ride?"

"We walk," Laramie said grimly.

Candy sighed elaborately and started along the veranda. Laramie prodded him with the Colt again. "No. Out in the street."

"In all that mud?"

"A little mud won't hurt you." Laramie twisted the gun barrel. "Move, Kid!"

They stepped out into the middle of the street. The rain was letting up a little, but they sank to the ankles with each step.

Laramie didn't once look toward the Grand Circle, yet as he walked, he felt a cold itch between his shoulder blades, and his neck began to ache from holding it rigid. Any second he expected a bullet to slam into his back.

Nothing happened.

Two blocks up the main street was the side street leading to where Candy was staying. As they turned, Laramie risked a quick glance back over his shoulder.

Snake Fisher was only a few yards back, walking fast.

A few feet into the street, Laramie snapped, "Wait up, Candy!"

He whirled, crouching. Snake was

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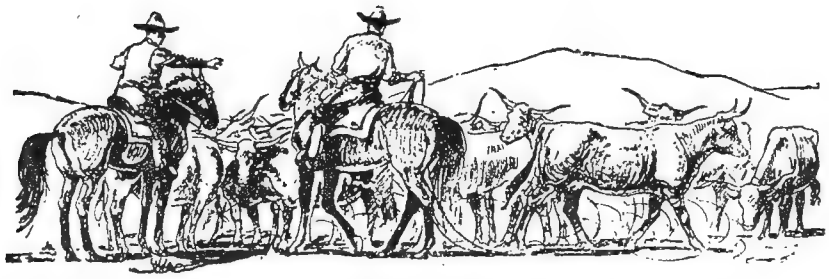

just rounding the corner. Laramie shouted, "Hold it right there, Snake!"

But Snake's gun was already out and coming up.

Laramie fired, aiming low. He didn't want the man dead. Not yet. His bullet slammed into Snake's thigh. His leg was knocked out from under him, his own shot going wild.

"What the hell—" Candy muttered.

Without answering, Laramie hurried to the man on his back in the mud. He kicked the pistol out of Snake's hand.

Snake's face was contorted in agony. He was swearing in a low monotone. When he saw Laramie bending over him, his face blanched with terror. "I didn't aim to do it, Mr. Nelson, I swear! But he, Nat Colton, he offered me more money!"

"How much did he offer you to backshoot me?"

"Not you, him!" He nodded past Laramie at Candy. "He said he'd pay a thousand dollars for him dead."

Laramie glanced up at Candy, whose face was a study in bewilderment, then back at Snake Fisher. "Candy? Why kill him; he's Colton's right hand?"

"Colton said he didn't need him anymore, said he could swing the rest hisself," Snake babbled. "Said he didn't trust the Candy Kid no more, not after sending a Pinkerton man to him. Said if he couldn't trust him now, how could he when he takes over the state?"

Laramie said tensely, "Then Colton is planning a take-over?"

"Sure, Mr. Nelson, I thought you—" Snake broke off short, eyes widening in sudden terror. "No, don't—" He started to rise.

A shot boomed out in the narrow street, and Snake Fisher fell back, a black hole appearing in his shirt over the heart.

Laramie whirled on his knees, his Colt coming up. But Candy didn't pose any threat. He stood with Snake's muddy gun smoking in his hand, gazing down at the dead man with a musing expression. He said absently, "Reckon we're even, Johnny boy. I saved you from Joe Lidski, you saved me from this piece of buzzard meat."

Laramie stood up and took the gun from Candy's unresisting hand. He said, "But why did you kill him? At least before we got the whole story?"

"I heard enough. The so-and-so said Colton's put a price on my head, didn't he? That's all I needed to know!"

"But I wanted him alive to talk to someone, the Army commander."

"We don't need him. I know enough. I know about the holdup planned for the morning." He glanced at Laramie, his face set in anger, looking years older suddenly. "I may be a thief, I may be a killer, I may be many things, but one thing I'm not. I'm not a traitor to my country!"

LARAMIE NELSON took Candy to the office of the Army commander, Lieutenant Colonel E. B. Coffrett, in the temporary barracks.

Colonel Coffrett was a bulldog of a man, short, stocky, with gray, wiry hair and a permanent expression of distaste, a parade ground bark to his voice.

Also in the office was his adjutant, a Captain Moore. Laramie had heard of Moore, a handsome, dashing officer with a reputation as a ladies man. But he was much more than that. Laramie knew of his fine Army record, and he also knew that Moore had, at the amazing age of twenty-five, written a book on railroad military tactics which was a textbook used in many military academies, including West Point.

Laramie showed the two officers his credentials and quickly explained the situation as he knew it, mentioning that his mission was on the behalf of President Grant. Colonel Coffrett was impressed by this fact, and he was both astonished and offended by the mere idea of Nat Colton's scheme.

He got up from behind his desk and began to pace, short legs hitting the floor like stumps. "Take over the state! We have just fought a war over secession, sir!"

"I know that, Colonel. And Colton's making use of that fact. Most of his men are ex-Confederate soldiers."

"I find this hard to accept, sir, that any man would have the gall to attempt such a thing right under my nose! I will smash him, sir, smash him!" He smacked a fist into his palm.

"Colonel," Captain Moore interjected smoothly, "I believe the most immediate thing is the planned robbery."

"Quite right, Captain, quite right."

Colonel Coffrett wheeled and began barking questions at Candy Kesson.

They quickly learned the essentials of the robbery plan. Candy's men were to ambush the gold train about five miles from Carson City, in a narrow gorge. The track would be blown up with dynamite just before the locomotive reached the end of the gorge. Then Candy's men would deal with any troops on the train while the gold was being transferred to wagons and hauled away. It sounded simple and effective.

Colonel Coffrett leveled a finger at Candy. "I'm not a fool, sir! My men are patroling the tracks to guard against just this very thing."

Candy blinked. "What thing?"

"Blowing up the tracks. How do you propose to get close enough to do that?"

"Oh, that." Candy shrugged. "That was figgered out weeks ago, when we first learned the shipment was going by railroad. The track was mined and the fuses buried. They lead a hundred yards away from the tracks. Your patrols will never discover the fuses."

"It can be done," Captain Moore said thoughtfully. "That method was used at

Petersburg shortly before the capture of Richmond. Powder was exploded from a distance by the careful use of fuses. To my knowledge, that was the first time it was ever done."

The Colonel paced, scowling fiercely. Laramie saw now what Allison had meant; Colonel Coffrett wasn't the most intelligent man the Army could have had in charge.

After a respectful silence, Captain Moore said, "Sir, we could concentrate troops on the gorge, a sortie to capture the bandits before they light the fuses."

Colonel Coffrett stared at his adjutant through narrowed eyes. Then he snapped his fingers.

"Captain Moore, you will send a detail of men into that gorge. They will arrive at first light and engage the dynamiters."

"Yes, sir," Captain Moore, clicking his heels. His glance met Laramie's, and Laramie Nelson was sure he detected sardonic amusement in the officer's eyes.

"I think Colton may take Candy's

place," Laramie said, "since he no longer trusts him, may even think he's dead. He could even use his Regulators, as well as the outlaws."

"A ragtag bunch!" the colonel barked. "They'll stand no chance against regular troops!"

Laramie wasn't so sure, but he didn't think it would be diplomatic to say so. Instead he said, "Might I suggest something, Colonel? It might not be a bad idea to get off a wire to Carson, saying the Candy Kid is dead. That way, Colton is sure to lead the raid."

The colonel stared, then snapped his fingers. "Good thinking, Nelson. Good thinking indeed!"

Laramie glanced over at Candy. "And maybe we should take Candy along on the train. Just in case."

"Glad to oblige, Johnny boy." Candy grinned for the first time, a vicious, killing grin. "All I ask is first crack at Colton."

He was interrupted by a knock on the door. A trooper stuck his head in. "A man here to see you, Colonel sir."

Fred Royal was ushered in. He stopped short at the sight of Laramie. "Nelson! I didn't know you'd be here but I'm glad you are." Royal was unshaven, his clothes rumpled, his face gaunted. "I discovered last night that you were telling me the truth. My wife—" He paused, looking stricken. Then he squared his shoulders and went on.

"In a moment of anger with me last night, my wife revealed to me that all you told me is true. Colton boasted to her about it. He has some Napoleonic scheme of becoming Emperor of Nevada. My wife sides with him. I have no apologies for my wife, gentlemen. She has never liked this country and my position here. It seems even my being governor wouldn't be—" His voice trailed off, and he looked at the colonel.

"That's why I'm here, Colonel. I'm resigning from the governor's race, but first something must be done about Nat Colton."

"And by God, sir, something will be!" Colonel Coffrett barked. "I will see this traitor hanged!"

"But first the gold shipment, sir," Captain Moore reminded him gently.

The colonel batted a hand. "Yes, yes, of course."

"Then I take it Colton knows his game is up?" Laramie asked Royal.

"I'm afraid so, Mr. Nelson," Royal said heavily. "My wife will have told him by this time."

"Which means Colton will certainly be leading the attack, probably with some, if not all, of his Regulators. He has nothing to lose now, and he'll hope to grab the gold and run with it."

THE GOLD shipment was due to leave Virginia City shortly before noon

the next morning. Laramie Nelson stood at the rear of the four-car train with Candy Kesson, watching the troops board. Candy's gun had been returned to him. It hadn't been decided what charges would be lodged against him. Robbery, followed by a prison sentence, was the most likely. No one seemed concerned about the death of Snake Fisher.

Captain Moore approached them. "We'll be pulling out in a couple minutes, Mr. Nelson. We've placed fifty men on the train. Another troop has been sent to the gorge. That should have that cleaned up long before we get there."

"Candy says he turned all the gold over to Colton, Captain. He's the only one knows where it is, what's left of it. It's important we take him alive. Otherwise, we may never find the gold."

The adjutant nodded his handsome head. "Those orders have already been issued, sir."

"Them orders mean nothing to me," Candy said flatly. "Not if I get Colton in my sights!"

"You kill him, Candy, and you'll have me to answer to," Laramie said.

Candy merely shrugged, turning away.

Laramie debated taking the youth's gun, but things might get hectic when Colton and his men hit the train. Unarmed, Candy wouldn't stand a chance.

They received the signal to board. The engine had steam up, puffing nervously. The gold was aboard, and the troopers had been dispersed along the train. Colonel Coffrett came aboard with Fred Royal, a signal was given, and they moved out jerkily.

Colonel Coffrett summoned Laramie to the first car, which he had taken over as his command headquarters. Royal was shaven and had changed into fresh clothes, but he still looked haggard.

"Well, we're prepared for them, Mr. Nelson," Colonel Coffrett said expansively. "I've a number of ex-Indian fighters in my command, you know. They'll have crept up on those dynamiters by now, I expect, and have them in custody."

"Along with the wagons," Captain Moore said.

"I've also wired east," the colonel said. "There'll be a full regiment in Carson within a matter of days, sir, to deal with that rag-tag bunch of Colton's."

Laramie didn't feel nearly so confident, but he felt bound to compliment the officer on his thoroughness.

Colonel Coffrett preened. "I hope you will mention this to President Grant in your report." He laughed heartily. "A good word on high never hurts, eh?"

An orderly brought refreshments, whiskey was served, and time passed quickly, pleasantly. The sound of the wheels clacking on the rails, the puffing engine, the liquor and food . . . all had a lulling effect.

Laramie had to fight to stay awake, and he was slightly surprised when an officer entered the command car to announce that the gorge was just ahead.

Colonel Coffrett jumped up with a pleased smile, slapping the holstered pistol at his side. Laramie went to the front of the car with him. In a moment the colonel pointed to a guidon carried by a mounted trooper off to the right of the tracks. The trooper dipped it three times.

"That's the signal, sir," Colonel Coffrett said with satisfaction. "They've got the powder and the wagons." He cast a sidelong look at Laramie. "There's your plot, sir. All neatly tied up."

The engine didn't stop, but chugged on through the canyon rhythmically, steadily. Everyone relaxed; there would be no gold raid. Colonel Coffrett proposed a toast.

Three miles beyond the gorge they came round a bend and faced an oncoming train engine, pulling two cars.

At the same time dynamite sticks were tossed at the gold train from the ground, exploding and ripping the last car apart. The train screeched to a shuddering stop. There was instant pandemonium.

Laramie, thrown to the floor by the grinding, screeching halt, clambered to his feet. His ears were assailed by a fusillade of shots, yells and conflicting orders. The troopers were completely disorganized, most of them having already stacked their weapons. Sergeants bawled, trying to sort them out and get them to the windows with their carbines. From somewhere a bugle sounded, thin and piercing above the

thunderous noise of scattered gunfire.

Colonel Coffrett, Laramie saw, had been knocked out by the sudden halt. Two men were trying to revive him. Captain Moore took charge. Seemingly undaunted by the sudden attack, he was brilliantly organizing a defense, slowly bringing order out of chaos. Laramie realized that the man's reputation as a student of train warfare was well-deserved.

Seeing he wasn't needed, Laramie made his way, pushing and shoving, to the rear door. Gun in hand, he jumped across to the next car, snapping off a shot at a horseman who shouted at him. The man's shot ripped wood off the car just above Laramie's head. Then he was in the car and racing toward the rear.

All around him the troopers were settling down to work, firing back at the raiders now riding up and down the stalled train on both sides. It was something like being inside a boiler factory. The continuous roll of carbine fire was thunderous, and acrid smoke stung Laramie's eyes.

The last car was completely demolished. Laramie frowned at the wreckage and at the track, which seemed undamaged, then made his way back to the command car. The colonel was conscious, but he seemed dazed. Captain Moore had restored order, and his troopers were coolly returning the fire from outside.

Laramie yelled in his ear, "If we can back the engine, push the wrecked car off the tracks, then we can back into

the gorge. The troopers back there can help us."

Captain Moore nodded. "We're holding them, but that's a sound idea. See if you can get to the engine."

Laramie made his way forward, clambering over the stacks of wood in the wood-car. Two troopers were firing steadily from the engine compartment. The fireman was down, huddled in death. The engineer was frightened but unhurt.

"Back the train," Laramie yelled at him.

The engineer stared at him without comprehension.

Laramie shook him by the shoulder. "We're going to shove the wrecked car off the tracks and back to the gorge!"

The engineer nodded, then gestured to the dead fireman.

"I'll fire it!" Laramie shouted.

He leaped up onto the wood car and started throwing wood down. Then he froze, staring. Two cars back was Candy Kesson, balancing delicately on the top of the car. He was looking past Laramie. Laramie glanced back toward the other engine. Nat Colton, at the head of a dozen mounted men, was loping toward them.

Candy, drawing his pistol, was still coming. Laramie scrambled for the top of the next car, shouting, "No, Kid, no!"

Just as Laramie reached the top, the engineer started the train backing, reversing the wheels, and Laramie had to grab at the boardwalk to keep from being thrown off.

He heard a shot. Candy had fired. Laramie risked a glance back and saw Colton still coming. The jerking train had spoiled Candy's aim.

Laramie stood up, drawing his Colt. "Don't do it, Kid!"

Candy glared at him, his face contorted. "Don't butt in, Nelson! Colton belongs to me!"

He started to bring his gun around, and Laramie fired carefully. Laramie saw dust puff up as his shot hit Candy's left shoulder. The shattering impact sent Candy tumbling from the slow-moving train, and he disappeared from sight. Laramie hoped he'd be picked up real soon with the rest of the wounded. He liked the Candy Kid.

Remembering, Laramie spun around in a crouch.

Colton had seen him and yelled something. He rode straight for the train, firing as he came. His shots went wild as the train continued to move. Laramie fell to one knee and took careful aim. He only wanted to wound, not kill. He squeezed off a shot, missed, then fired again. His second shot hit Colton, knocking him from the saddle.

Without hesitation Laramie leaped from the train. He landed on his feet, took a few stumbling steps and fell, rolling down the shallow embankment. He was on his feet immediately. Several of the raiders milled around their fallen leader.

Laramie started toward them, then slowed. It would be foolhardy to take on a dozen men.

Then he heard a fresh burst of gunfire. He glanced around. A group of mounted men were pounding down the track toward the train, firing as they came. The troopers from the gorge.

At this appearance of reinforcements, their leader on the ground, the raiders began to disperse, fleeing in all directions. Within seconds Nat Colton

was all alone.

It was all over.

Laramie walked over to him. He wasn't dead, a wound seeping blood high on his shoulder. Moaning in pain. Colton was no longer a threat.

Holstering his Colt, Laramie glanced toward the train. It was slowing to a stop. He saw Captain Moore jump to the ground and hurry toward him. The mounted troopers had reached the train now and were scattering in pursuit of the fleeing raiders.

An hour later the gold train chugged into Carson City, the other train manned by troopers and backing in before it. The wounded Nat Colton had been questioned thoroughly by Fred Royal, in between blustering threats of hanging from Colonel Coffrett, and had revealed the hiding place of what gold was left from the two previous robberies. Royal was morosely happy with the smashing of Colton's plans, but he still remained firm in his intention of withdrawing from the governor's race.

The first person Laramie saw in the Carson station as he stepped off the train was Brock Peters, edging toward him through the waiting crowd, bowler hat bobbing.

As the Pinkerton man reached him, Laramie said, "Good news, Brock! It's all finished. You can wire President—"

"Never mind all that!" Peters snarled, waving a telegram at Laramie. "I want to know what this is all about! Five hundred dollars, indeed! Just what the devil do you think I am, a New York banker?"

Laramie Nelson stared at him, nonplused. And then, suddenly he started to laugh. A minute later he was lopping toward his horse. "Excuse me, Breck. I'll see you soon. I've got to look for a good friend of mine. I had to shoot him!" ●

The Wolf Tracker

(continued from page 21)

yesterday. He was somewhere up or down those ragged slopes. Cunning as he was, he had to hold contact with earth and rock; he had to slay and eat; he must leave traces of his nature, his life, his habit and his action. To these Brink would address himself with all the sagacity of an old hunter, but with something infinitely more—a passion which he did not understand. "Well, Old Gray, I'm on your track," and strapping the heavy pack on his broad shoulders, he took up the carbine and strode along the trail.

It pleased Brink to find that his first surmise was as correct as if he had cognizance of Old Gray's instincts. The wolf tracks soon sheered off the trail. Old Gray was not now a hunting or a prowling wolf. He was a traveling wolf, but he did not keep to the easy-going, direct trail.

Brink could not find tracks on gravel and bowlders, so he crossed the wide bottom of the gorge, and after a while found Old Gray's trail on the opposite slope. Before he struck it he had believed the wolf was heading for high country. Brink tracked him over a forested ridge and down into an intersecting cañon, where on the rocks of a dry stream bed the trail failed.

At length he came to pools of water in rocky recesses, where the sand and gravel bars showed the tracks of cattle, bear and deer. But if Old Gray had passed on up that narrowing cañon, he had avoided the water holes. Patches of maple and thickets of oak covered the steep slopes, leading up to the base of cracked and seamed cliffs, and they in turn sheered up to where the level rim shone black-fringed against the blue. Here the stream bed was covered with the red and gold and purple of fallen autumn leaves.

The sun, now at the zenith, fell hot upon Brink's head. He labored on, to climb out a narrow defile that led to the level forest above. Here the wind blew cool. Brink rested a moment. Then he strode east along the precipice, carefully searching for the wolf trail he had set out upon. In a mile of slow travel, he did not discover a sign of Old Gray. Retracing his steps, he traveled west for a like distance, without success. Whereupon he returned to the head of the cañon out of which he had climbed, and there, divesting himself of

his pack, he set about a more elaborate scrutiny of ground, grass, moss and rock.

He worked back from the Rim down into an aspen swale that deepened into a cañon, heading away from the Rim. He had no reason to believe Old Gray would travel this way, except that long experience had taught him where to search first for tracks. And quite abruptly he came upon the huge footprint of the lofer, made in soft black mud beside elk tracks that led into a hole where water had recently stood.

"Hah!" ejaculated Brink. "You're interested in that yearlin' elk. Well, Old Gray, I'll let this do for today."

The cold, raw dawn found Brink stirring. A blanket of cloud had prevented a white frost on the grass, but there glistened a film of ice on the brook. As the sun came up, it brightened a blue sky mostly clear. The drift of the thin clouds was from the southwest, and they were traveling fast.

Before the sun had warmed out the shade of the cañon Brink, pack on back and rifle in hand, had taken up Old Gray's trail. The wolf showed a preference for the open canyon, and in many places left plain imprints in the sand. The canyon, running away from the Rim, deepened and widened; and its disconnected pools of water at last became a running stream. Evidently the great wolf was not losing time to place distance between him and his last kill. Brink found no more sign of his evincing interest in any tracks.

About noon, by which time Brink had trailed the animal fully ten miles down the canyon, seldom losing the tracks for long, Old Gray took to an intersecting canyon, rough-walled and brushy, and soon he went up into the rocks. It took Brink all afternoon to find where the wolf had lain, but Brink would gladly have spent days for such a triumph.

"Aha, you old gray devil!" he soliloquized, as he bent his gaze on a snug retreat under shelving rocks, where showed the betraying impress of feet and body of the wolf. "So you have to sleep an' rest, huh? Well, I reckon you can't get along without killin' an' eatin' too. Old Gray, you're bound to leave tracks, an' I'll find them."

At length Brink came to a beaver dam, and on the very edge of it, deep in the wet mud, showed the unmistakable tracks of the giant wolf. From that point Old Gray's tracks showed in the wet places up and down the banks of the narrow ponds of water. He had been vastly curious about these dams and mounds erected by the beaver. Everywhere he left tracks. But Brink could not find any sign of the wolf catching a beaver unawares. The beaver of this colony had been at work that

night cutting the aspen trees and dragging boughs and sections of trunks under the water.

Sunset came before Brink had found a track of the wolf leading away from that park. Still he made camp satisfied with the day. Any day in which he found a single fresh track of this wolf was indeed time well spent. His hope was that he might keep the general direction Old Gray had taken until the snow began to fall.

Night settled down like a black blanket; the wind moaned louder than usual. Brink soliloquized that the wind was warning Old Gray to leave the country before the fatal snow fell. Contrary to his custon on preceding nights, he sat up a long time and, whether he had his face to the fire or his back, his palms were always spread to the comforting heat. Brink looked and listened with more than usual attention during this vigil beside the camp fire.

"Rain or snow sure," he muttered.

At length drowsiness made his eyelids heavy, and he sought his bed under the shelter of pine boughs. Sleep claimed him. He awakened with a feeling that only a moment had elapsed, but he could tell by the dead camp fire how misleading this was. Something had roused him.

Suddenly from the dark forest on the cold wind came the deep wild bay of a hunting wolf. With a start Brink sat up. No other wild sound in nature had such power over him. It seemed as if this bay came from a vague, dim past. Again it pealed out, but with a sharper note, not greatly different from that of a hunting hound.

"Lofers trailin' a deer," said Brink. "Two of them, mebbe more."

Again he heard the bays, growing farther away, and another time, quite indistinct. After that the weird moaning solitude of the forest remained undisturbed.

Brink lay back in his blanket, but not to sleep. He would lie awake now for a long while. He imagined he heard deep, low bays back in the forest. Always the wind made the sound for which the eager ears were attuned. Suddenly Brink again sat up. "Say, have I got a nightmare?"

He turned his ear away from the cold wind and, holding his breath, he listened. Did he hear a bay or a moan in the forest? Long he remained stiff, intent. Now he felt himself fooled, and then he was sure he heard something. His patience matched his imagination. Then came a slight lull in the wind, and into it rang a low, deep wolf-bay, wild and terrible in its suggestiveness. "Reckon that's a bigger, older wolf," observed Brink. "An' if he runs this way it means somethin'."

Not for a long time did the strange sound ring out, and then it was followed by another one, less hoarse and deep.

"Two more lofers, an' sure one of them is not what I heard before," said Brink.

Twice again he caught the lower, shorter sound, coming against the wind. Then ensued an interval fraught with listening suspense. Brink slowly sank back, almost convinced that his expectation was groundless. Close at hand then, across the pond in the forest, burst out a loud rolling, deep-throated bay like that of a great bloodhound, only infinitely wilder.

It thrilled Brink to the marrow of his bones. He jerked up with a burst of hot fire over him. "Old Gray! That's Old Gray!" he exclaimed exultantly. "No ordinary lofer could have a voice like that. He's fallen in with the bunch rangin' this forest. An' sure as I'm born they're relayin' a deer."

Far off in the woods the bay pealed out, clear on the wind now, remarkable in its appalling long-drawn note of savage nature. These bays came from the same direction as those that had awakened Brink. The wolves had resorted to a trick Brink knew well. The pack had split into several parts, one of which relayed the deer for a time, driving it round while the others rested. In Brink's experience the trick was common for a pack that had a great leader.

III

BRINK HAD LONG fortified himself to meet the grueling test of this chase—the most doubtful time; the weeks of cold tracking, the ever-increasing distance between him and the great wolf. For when Old Gray espied him that morning, he took to real flight. Suspicious of this strange pursuer without horse or dog, he left the country.

The king of the gray wolves became a hunted creature. He shunned the range lands, where the cattle nipped the bleached grass out of the thinning snow. At night, on the cedar slopes, he stalked deer, and his kills grew infrequent. At dawn he climbed to the deep snows of the uplands, and his periods of sleep waxed shorter.

Brink's snowshoes were as seven-league boots. The snow was nothing to him. But Old Gray labored through the drifts. The instinct of the wild animal prompts it to react to a perilous situation in a way that almost always is right. Safety for the intelligent wolf did lie away from the settlements, the ranches and the lowlands, far up in the snowy heights. Many a pack of hounds and band of horsemen Old Gray had eluded in the deep snows. In this case, however, he had something to reckon with beyond his ken.

Hunger at length drove Old Gray farther down the south slopes, where he stalked deer and failed to kill as often as he killed. Time passed, and the night came when the wolf missed twice on chances that, not long ago, would have been play for him. He never attempted to trail another deer. Instead he tracked turkeys to their roosts and skulked in the brush until at dawn they alighted. Not often was his cunning rewarded. Lower still he was forced to go, into the canyons, and on the edge of the lowlands where like any common coyote he chased rabbits. And then his kills became few and far between. Last and crowning proof of his hunger and desperation, he took to eating porcupines. How the mighty had fallen! Brink read this tragedy in the tracks in the snow.

FOR WEEKS Brink had expected to overtake Old Gray and drive him from his day's lair. This long-hoped-for event at length took place at noon of a cold bright day, when Brink suddenly espied the wolf on the summit of a high ridge, silhouetted against the pale sky. Old Gray stood motionless, watching him. Brink burst out with his savage yell. The wolf might have been a statue for all the reaction he showed.

"Huh! Reckon my eyes are tired of this snow glare," muttered Brink, "but I ain't blind yet. That's sure Old Gray."

The black slash at the neck identified the notorious lofer; otherwise Brink could not have made certain.

Old Gray appeared ragged and gaunt. The hunter shaded his eyes with his hand and looked long at his coveted quarry. Man and beast gazed at each other across the wide space.

For Brink it was a moment of most extraordinary exultation. He drew a great breath; and expelled it in a yell that seemed to pierce the very rocks. Old Gray dropped his head and slunk down out of sight behind the ridge.

Brink plodded on wearily, every step a torture. Only the iron of his will, somehow projected into his worn muscles and bones, kept him nailed to that trail. His eyes had begun to trouble him. He feared snowblindness, that bane of the mountaineer. Upon rounding a thicket of spear-pointed spruce, Brink came to a level white bench, glistening like a wavy floor of diamonds in the sunlight.

Halfway across this barren mantle of snow a gray beast moved slowly. Old Gray! He was looking back over his shoulder, wild of aspect, sharp in outline. The distance was scarce three hundred yards, a short range for Brink's unerring aim. This time he did not yell. Up swept his rifle and froze to his shoulder. His keen eye caught the little circular sight and filled with gray.

But Brink could not pull the trigger. A tremendous shock passed over him. It left him unstrung. The rifle wavered out of alignment with the dragging wolf. Brink lowered the weapon.

"What's come—over me?" he rasped out, in strange amaze. The truth held aloof until Old Gray halted out there on the rim of the bench and gazed back at his human foe.

"I'll kill you with my bare hands!" yelled Brink in terrible earnestness.

Not until the ultimatum burst from his lips did the might of passion awake in him. Then for a moment he was as a men possessed with demons. He paid in emotion for the months of strain on body and mind. That spell passed. It left him rejuvenated.

"It's man agin wolf!" he called grimly.

And he threw his rifle aside into the snow, where it sank out of sight.

Brink had to zigzag down snowy slopes, because it was awkward and sometimes hazardous to attempt abrupt descents on snowshoes. Again the lofer drew out of sight. Brink crossed and recrossed the descending tracks. Toward the middle of the afternoon the mountain slope merged into a level and more thickly timbered country. Yet the altitude was too great for dense forest. It was a wilderness of white and black, snowy ridges, valleys, swales and senecas interspersed among strips of forest, patches and thickets of spruce, deep belts of timber.

Brink did not see the wolf again that day, though he gained upon him. Night intervened.

In the cold gray dawn, when the ghostly spruces were but shadows, Brink strode out on the trail. There was now a difference in his stride. For months he had tramped along, reserving his strength, slowly, steadily, easily, without hurry or impatience. That restraint constituted part of his greatness as a tracker. But now he had the spring of a deer stalker in his step. The weariness and pang of muscle and bone had strangely fled.

Old Gray's tracks now told only one story. Flight! He did not seek to hunt meat. He never paused to scent at trail of deer or cat. His tracks seemed to tell of his wild yet sure hope of soon eluding his pursuer.

Before noon Brink again came in sight of the wolf. Old Gray passed the zone of snow crust. He walked and waded and wallowed through the deep white drifts. How significant that he gazed backward more than forward! Whenever he espied Brink, he forced a harder gait that kept the hunter from gaining.

The next morning was not half gone before Brink caught up with Old Gray. The wolf had not eaten or slept or rested, yet he had traveled scarcely ten miles. But he had lagged along. At sight of the hunter he exhibited the panic of a craven dog. The action of his accelerated pace was like the sinking of his body forward. Then he went on, and for long kept even with his pursuer.

The time came, however, when Brink began almost imperceptibly to gain. Brink's practiced eye saw it long before the wolf. But at length Old Gray looked back so often that he bumped into brush and trees. Then he seemed hurried into a frenzy which did not in the least augment his speed. He knew his pursuer was gaining, yet even that could not spur his jaded body to greater effort.

The hours wore on. The moon soared. The scene changed. A wind mourned out of the north. The spectral spruces swayed against the blue sky. A muffled roar of slipping avalanche rose from a long distance and died away. On the level reaches of snow that bright eye above could see the slow diminishing of space between man and wolf. Five hundred yards—four hundred—three hundred!

When daylight came, and Brink saw Old Gray dragging his gaunt body through the snow, now only a hundred paces distant he awoke the cold, mocking echoes with his terrible yell. And the shock of it appeared to send the wolf staggering off his feet. When the sun tipped the snow-rimmed mountain far above, to bathe the valley in morning glory, Brink was gaining inch by inch.

The end of the long chase was not far off. Old Gray's heart had broken. It showed in every step he made. Sagging and lame, he struggled through the snow, fell and got up to drive his worn-out body to yet another agony. Seldom he gazed back now. When he did turn, he showed to Brink a wolf face that seemed extraordinarily to express the unalterable untamableness of the wild. That spirit was fear. If in that instant Old Gray could have suddenly become endowed with all his former strength he would never have turned to kill his age-long enemy.

Brink's endurance was almost spent. Yet he knew he would last, and his stride did not materially lessen. Inch by inch he gained. But he stifled his strange exultation.

The battle must go to the strong, to prove the survival of the fittest. Nature had developed this wolf to the acme of perfection. But more merciless than Nature was life, for life had weakness. Man shared this weakness with all animals, but man possessed some strange, sustaining, unutterable, ineradicable power. Brink relied upon it. Old Gray was yielding to it.

The last hour grew appalling. Brink felt on the verge of collapse. Old Gray's movements were those of a dying creature. The hunter did not gain any more. Over white benches, through spruce thickets, under the windfalls man and beast remained only a few paces apart. Brink could have knocked the wolf over with a club. But he only stretched out a great clutching hand, as if the next moment he could close it round that black-slashed neck.

Under Brink's snowshoes the snow grew wet and soft. Soon he must take them off. But there would be drifts in the black belt of pine forest below. He smelled the tang of the pines, warm, sweet, woody. The irregular furrow which he trod out with his snowshoes led down over slope and bench to level forest. Under the stately spreading pines the snow swelled into wavy mounds.

Old Gray sank the length of his legs, fell on his side and lay still. Soon the wolf tracker stood over him, gazing down. "Ahuh! Old Gray, you're done!" he panted huskily.

All that appeared left of magnificence about this wolf was his beautiful gray coat of fur, slashed at the neck with a glossy mark of black. Old Gray was lean and thin. His wild head lay on the snow, with mouth open, tongue protruding. How white and sharp the glistening fangs!

It was nothing new for Brink to see the coward in a beaten wolf. The legend of the ferocity of a trapped wolf was something he knew to be untrue. This notorious lofer, so long a menace to the range, showed in his wonderful gray eyes his surrender to man. The broken heart, the broken spirit, the acceptance of death! Brink saw no fear now, only resignation. And for a moment it halted his propelling rush to violence.

Man and wolf, age-long hereditary foes, alone there in the wilderness! Man the conqueror, man obsessed with the idea that man was born in the image of God! No wolf, no beast had ever been or could ever be man's equal. Brink's life had been an unconscious expression of this religion. This last and supreme test to which he had so terribly addressed himself had been the climax of his passion to prove man's mastery over all the beasts of the field.

Yet, with brawny hand extended, Brink suffered a singular and dismaying transformation of thought. What else did he read in those wild gray eyes? It

was beyond him, yet from it he received a chilling of his fevered blood, a sickening sense of futility even in possession of his travail-earned truth. Could he feel pity for Old Gray, blood drinker of the cattle ranges?

"Ahuh! Reckon if I held back longer—" he muttered darkly, wonderingly.

Then stepping out of his snowshoes, he knelt and laid hold of Old Gray's throat with that great clutching hand.

IV

IT WAS springtime down at Barrett's ranch. The cows were lowing and the calves were bawling. Birds and wet ground and budding orchard trees were proof of April, even if there had not been the sure sign of the rollicking cowboys preparing for the spring round-up.

"I'm a-rarin' to go. Oh, boy!" shouted Sandy McLean.

The shaggy, vicious mustangs cavorted in the corral, and whistled, squealed, snorted and kicked defiance at their masters.

"Reckon I gotta stop smokin'. I just cain't see," complained Thad Hickenthorp.

"Aw, it ain't smokin', Hick," drawled the red-headed Matty Lane. "Yore eyes has plumb wore out on Sally Barrett."

"She's shore dazzlin', but that's far enough for you to shoot off yore chin," replied Thad.

"Cheese it, you fellars. Hyar comes the boss," added another cowboy.

Barrett strode from the ranch house. Once he had been a cowboy as lithe and wild as any one of his outfit. But now he was a heavy, jovial, weather-beaten cattleman.

"Boys, heah's word from my pardner, Adams," he said with satisfaction. "All fine an' dandy over on the Cibique. You got to rustle an' shake dust or that outfit will show us up. Best news of all is about Old Gray. They haven't seen hide nor hair nor track of that wolf for months. Neither have we. I wonder now—Wouldn't it be dod-blasted good luck if we was rid of that lofer?"

On the moment a man appeared turning into the lane, and his appearance was so unusual that it commanded silence on the part of Barrett and his cowboys. This visitor was on foot. He limped. He sagged under a pack on his shoulder. His head was bowed somewhat, so that the observers could not see his face. His motley garb was so tattered that it appeared to be about to fall from him in bits of rags.

He reached the group of men and, depositing his pack on the ground, he looked up to disclose a placid grizzled face, as seamed and brown as a mass of pine needles.

"Howdy, stranger. An' who might you be?" queried Barrett gruffly.

"My name's Brink. I'm new in these parts. Are you Barrett, pardner to Adams, over on the Cibique?" he replied.

"Yes, I'm Barrett. Do you want anythin' of me?"

"I've something to show you," returned Brink and, kneeling stiff legged, he laboriously began to untie his pack.

When Brink drew out a gray furry package and unfolded it to show the magnificent pelt of a great lofer wolf the cowboys burst into gasps and exclamations of amaze.

"Ever seen that hide?" demanded Brink, with something subtle and strong under his mild exterior.

"*Old Gray!*" boomed Barrett.

"I'm a locoed son of a gun if it ain't!" said Sandy McLean.

"I never seen Old Gray, but that's him!" ejaculated Thad.

"It's shore the gray devil with the black ruff. Old Gray wot I seen alive more'n any man on the ranges!" added Matty Lane in an incredulity full of regret.

"Stranger, how'n thunder did you catch this heah wolf?" demanded McLean.

Brink stood up. Something tame and deceiving fell away from the man. His face worked, his eye gleamed. "I walked him to death in the snow," he replied.

Barrett swore a lusty oath. It gave full expression to his acceptance of Brink's remarkable statement, yet held equal awe and admiration. "When? How long?" he queried hoarsely.

"Well, I started in early last October, an' I saw the end of his tracks yesterday."

"It's April tenth," exclaimed Barrett. "Tracked—walked Old Gray to death! By heaven, man, but you look it! An' you're come for the reward?"

"Reckon I'd forgot that," replied Brink simply. "I just wanted you to know the lofer was dead."

"Ah-hum! So that's why?" returned the rancher ponderingly, with a hand stroking his chin.

His keen blue eyes studied the wolf tracker gravely, curiously. His cowboys, likewise, appeared at the end of their wits. For once their loquaciousness had sustained a check. One by one, silent as owls and as wide-eyed, they walked to and fro round Brink, staring from his sad lined face to the magnificent wolf pelt.

But least of all did their faces and actions express doubt. They were men of the open range. They saw at a glance the manifestations of tremendous toil, of endurance, privation, and time that had reduced this wolf tracker to a semblance of a scarecrow in the cornfield. Of all things these hardy cowboys respected indomitableness of spirit and endurance of body. They wondered at something queer about Brink, but they could not grasp it. Their meed of silent conviction, their reverent curiosity, proclaimed that to them he began to loom incomprehensibly great.

"Never felt so happy in my life," burst out Barrett. "Come in an' eat an' rest. I'll write you a check for that five thousand. An' fetch Old Gray's hide to show my womenfolks. I'll have that hide made into a rug."

Brink gave a slight start, and his serenity seemed to shade into a somber detachment. Without a glance at Barrett he knelt, and folded up the wolf skin and tied it in his pack.

But when he arose, lifting the pack to his shoulder, he said, "Keep your money. Old Gray is mine."

Then he strode away.

"Hey, what d'ye mean—rarin' off that way?" called Barrett, growing red in the face. It was as if his sincerity or generosity had been doubted.

"Fetch the wolf hide back hyar an' take your money."

Brink appeared not to hear. His stride lengthened, showing now no trace of the limp which had characterized it upon his arrival.

The cattleman yelled angrily for him to stop. One of the cowboys let out a kindlier call.

But Brink, swinging into swifter stride, remarkable even at that moment to his watchers, passed into the cedars out of sight. ●

Hello, my name is Norris Strauss . . .

and I've got to get something off my chest before I explode!

You may think I'm a big shot for putting a full page ad in Zane Grey Magazine. Actually I just work at a regular job which I enjoy. I was born and raised in Brooklyn as were my parents—I have many relatives here. I've only moved once in 28 years.

I'm not a racetrack character, nor am I fronting for anybody. Instead of a yacht, sports car and six figure bank account as system writers boast, I drive an ordinary klunker and live in a modest apt. (my family says it's too modest). But I have plenty of leisure and a local rep as a studious neighbor who burns the midnight oil. I was always fascinated by serious research on old Racing Forms to see what I could come up with . . . well, after many disappointments, I finally found the pot of gold.

I've hit onto something so royally big that I feel like the Chinese with a tiger by the tail, and it's driving me nuts! I went into a spin and ordered a whole stack of back issue Racing Forms, and I found a winning secret that WORKS, period. I can't express the joy of this achievement, nor the sense of power or well being—I feel SECURE.

If I didn't expect a nice pension—I plan to pull a slow one and live to 100, didn't enjoy my job, didn't have ample leisure, if my family wouldn't give me a hard time, if I weren't so darn timid, if my religious parents weren't so anti-gambling, I'd follow the sun from track to track. I've figured I can win over $11,000 a year on $20 bets, and that's more than I earn. What to do? What to do?

I need advice. How can I convince people? I've got the races beat out of the frame and I just can't keep it to myself or I'll burst at the seams!

Maybe I shouldn't bring this up, as I have no proof and won't mention names. But something is odd—these horses are winning when they "shouldn't." If I've cracked a code involving track management, publishers or horsemen, or any related combination thereof, I'm ecstatic. If some group is making money on these winners, well—

I checked this method on old Racing Forms for the following periods: Nov. 65 through Apr. 66; Aug. 67 through 68; Jan. 69 through Sept. 69. All periods proved very profitable. Tightening the rules might improve it, but it looks great as is. Were these just lucky periods?

The system selects about 4½ plays per day per track, so you can see this gets plenty of action. Past results have shown that you can expect to make about $962 profit on $20 win bets per month at one track. Winners will average about 30% with an average win mutuel of about $9.55.

It's completely mechanical and requires no judgment. It's really simple. If I were dying, I could whisper it to you in about 100 words (60 if I had rehearsed the scene). All you need is the Racing Form or Morning Telegraph. No need to be at the track.

Ever did anything wild on a lark? Want to join this adventure, come what may, for $10? Ever thought of following the sun from track to track? Or perhaps playing the horses at the legal bookies in Vegas or Caliente? No job worries, no boss, sleep late, plenty of money—but most important of all, living the kind of life so few people are ever able to.

One last word. You've seen system sellers using aliases from p.o. boxes and mail drops. Has any one of them ever signed his real name, given his history, worked for an honest living, stayed put over 60 days, or cared for anything except getting your money? Weigh that.

I can rush my complete secret to you by return mail for $10. Check me out. Do what I did. Take any back Racing Forms over a reasonable period of time. Apply my system. If you can show me that it doesn't work, I'll NOT ONLY REFUND YOUR $10 BUT I'LL DOUBLE IT AND SEND YOU $20. Fair enough?

State of New York
County of Kings — OATH

I hereby swear and affirm that I guarantee to refund double the cost to any purchaser who checks my method out on back Racing Forms over a period of at least 3 months and finds that it does not work.

Norris Strauss

Sworn to before me

Frank Gayer

FRANK GAYER
Notary Public State of New York
NO. 24-6473975

READ HOW THOSE USING MY SYSTEM ARE MAKING OUT WITH IT

I can't thank you enough for this system. So far all my back checking has proven to be correct. The following results were obtained through diligent checking:

Hollywood Park	July 1 to Aug. 1, 1970	$1,394	(21 days)
Aqueduct	July 1 to Aug. 1, 1970	$814	(27 days)
Saratoga	Aug. 3 to Aug. 29, 1970	$826	(20 days)
Belmont Park	Aug. 31 to Sept. 30, 1970	$862	(25 days)
Golden Gate	Mar. 27 to April 10, 1971	$600	(13 days)
Del Mar	July 24 to Aug. 31, 1970	$4,252	(32 days)
Bowie	Mar. 24 to April 10, 1971	$930	(15 days)
Santa Anita	Mar. 24 to April 10, 1971	$1,000	(13 days)
Aqueduct	Mar. 24 to April 10, 1971	$400	(17 days)
Longacres	May 29 to June 28, 1970	$2,378	(20 days)
Longacres	Aug. 1 to Sept. 12, 1970	$1,840	(25 days)

I can just hardly believe it! Thanks to you I can win at the races!—*C.M., Seattle*

At Golden Gate here from Feb. 16th opening day to March 24th the system showed a *net* profit of $1728 on a $20 flat win bet. A $10 win $10 place bet showed $1257 net profit. From March 24th to present—the overall profit has decreased to $1200 flat win ($20).—*B.S., El Cerrito, Calif.*

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Everything you said is true. You have come up with the best system ever. I've tried to strengthen it, break it, refine it but I simply cannot come up with any way to improve on it. My success has been at the Liberty Bell and even when I wasn't at the track I figured the races and your method proved itself time and time again.—*D. F., West Chester, Pa.*

I am the owner of many racing systems, all which are very good. When I received the system which I ordered from you I tried the system, I checked and rechecked it, and I can truthfully say that it is one of the best systems I own. —*M. F. W., South English, Iowa*

Enclosed find results at the track for the last 2 months. It's incredible. I am ahead by $1550. You may use my name for any testimonial.—*L. O., Los Angeles, Cal.*

Incidentally, I find that the system's choice comes in 2nd often enough that it pays to bet both win and place. In fact winnings as far as I've gone are just about double by betting both. Thanks for being one honest solicitor.—*B. F., Gila Bend, Ariz.*

I owe you a million thanks. Just like you said, it doesn't work at all times, but I'll be honest with you the highest number always comes in the money.—*E. S., Lorain, Ohio*

I have been checking your method on some old forms for a period of 2 months so far and have found it profitable.—*N. S., Mount Vernon, N.Y.*

NORRIS M. STRAUSS — Dept. ZG-1
227 East 45th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017

GUARANTEED — MY METHOD WILL WORK FOR YOU OR DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK!

Dear Norris,

I enclose $10. Please send your complete guaranteed method. If I am not completely pleased, I may return it for a full refund. Or I may check your method out on back Racing Forms over a period of 3 months and if I find it does not work I'll receive a refund of DOUBLE THE COST OF YOUR METHOD ($20).

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